1; Herskovits E-4, 5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

Davers. In 1768 and 1769 they were "but tranquil spectators of the troubles caused by the re-establishment of the militia," the local military forces numbering at this time 260 whites and 291 *affranchis*, or free men of color.[3]

This white population was made up chiefly of those who came directly from France or were born in the colony, but also included were the Acadians, one of the most interesting groups who settled in Mirebalais. Fleeing from Newfoundland, they were brought to Haiti before they were sent to Louisiana, and in the course of this migration left some of their number in the valley. It is recorded that on the 26th day of October 1764, in consequence of "a Memorial presented by the Chamber of Agriculture of Port-au-Prince, which stressed the healthfulness of Mirebalais,"[4] each of a number of these Acadian families was allotted a plot of eight hundred square paces, not far from the town. The ending of this episode, however, was not happy, for, transported into a tropical climate that failed to measure up to the claims made for it, the Acadians paid so heavy a toll that soon all trace of them vanished.

But facts such as these tell little of the fundamental social and economic conditions of pre-Revolutionary Haiti, where Negro slavery constituted the foundation upon which the whole structure of life was erected. That Mirebalais was no exception to the prevailing economic regime is shown by Moreau de St. Mery's figures for the district, yet what stresses existed between the masters, the free persons of color, and the slaves, no record remains to show. Despite the fact that slaves and free men of color were accepted in the armed militia, the situation was far from tranquil. When, after the French Revolution, there were signs that the decree[5] which accorded to the free men of color political rights equal to those of the whites was in danger of being nullified in practice, it was at Mirebalais that the colored men assembled to insist on the enforcement of this order.[6] Together with some slaves they freed, they formed the nucleus of an army "that under the leader-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

ship of a very intelligent mulatto named Bauvais " gained some successes " over the undisciplined forces in Port-au-Prince " and forced the inhabitants of the capital to recognize the power of this group by entering into a definite treaty with them.[7]

There are other indications that life in the valley did not fail to reflect the discontent of the black slaves. Writing in 1830, Mackenzie, who was the first British Consul-General to the Haitian Republic, remarked:

> " It is said by some of the best informed Haitians, that among the mountains that stretch from the neighbourhood of Mirebalais to the coast on the east of Jacmel, there is an extensive association of the descendants of the Maroon negroes, whose independence had been recognised long before the revolution by the then existing government." [8]

It is thus apparent that the institution of *marronage*, whereby runaway slaves established themselves in the mountains, in many instances living for years beyond the reach of capture and free from attack, was known in Mirebalais as it was elsewhere. Mirebalais was also not without contact with the great heroes of Haitian history. Toussaint L'Ouverture conquered and lost the town several times before it became a strategic point " from which his lieutenants, Dessalines and Christophe, menaced Arcahaie and the plain of the Cul-de-Sac." [9]

If but little has been recorded concerning Mirebalais before Haitian independence, even less is known of its later history. Mackenzie, reporting the population of Haiti district by district, gives that of Mirebalais in 1802 as 53,649; but in 1825 as only 16,037.[10] Whether the region included under the term " Mirebalais " differed at the two periods, or whether the hardships resulting from the internal strife that racked Haiti after independence had been gained took a toll of the size suggested by these figures cannot be said. That Mirebalais was an

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CHAPTER I

THE AFRICAN HERITAGE

For the study of a civilization like that of Haiti, which is the result of close and continued contact between peoples with traditions as dissimilar as those of Europe and Africa, a peculiarly lively sense of time depth is needed. Yet though it has been repeatedly stated that Haiti is the child of Africa and France, even those who proclaim this emphatically fail too often to recognize the need for as detailed a knowledge as is possible of how the strands of history were woven into the fabric of Haitian cultural life. It is for this reason that before any description of the culture of Mirebalais can be attempted, not only must the names of the African tribes from which the Haitians were derived be given, but the broad characteristics of their cultures must be considered and, where possible, the classes of their population from which were derived the Negroes who were brought to Haiti. In addition, the importance of knowing the types of Frenchmen who migrated to the island during its colonial period and of understanding the modes of life they followed and presented to their slaves must be viewed as of the first order, while, finally, the manner in which these two sets of traditions were eventually forged into the structure of Haitian life as seen today must be analyzed if more than a superficial glimpse of this life is to result.

Writing in 1730, a Jesuit priest named Pierre François

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1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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Xavier de Charlevoix [1] designated the following varieties of slaves found on the island: the *Sénégallois*, who are "of all the Negroes the best fashioned, the easiest to discipline, and the most adapted for domestic service"; the *Bambaras*, "tallest of all, but thieves"; the *Aradas*, "those who know agriculture best, but who are the proudest"; the *Congos*, "the smallest and the most apt at fishing," but who were most prone to desert their masters; the *Nagos*, "the most human"; the *Mondongos*, "the most cruel"; the *Mines*, "the most resolute, the most capricious, and the most subject to despair of themselves."

St. Mery, the importance of whose work has already been mentioned, gives a more detailed list than that of Charlevoix.[2] Of slaves who came from tribes living in the northern part of West Africa he names the *Sénégalais*, *Yoloffes*, and *Foules*, the *Bambaras*, *Quiambas*, *Mandingues*, and *Sosos*, as well as Negroes from the Bissagot Islands, though the last two categories are reported as but sparsely represented in the colony of Santo Domingo. Following the coast of Africa round its great bend, he speaks of the *Bouriquis* and the *Mesurades*, or *Cangas*, as deriving from the region between Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, while he notes the *Aradas*, the *Caplaous*, the *Mines*, the *Agouas*, the *Socos*, and the *Fantins*, as coming from the area between Cape Appolonia and the Volta River, an area whose tribes made substantial contributions to the Haitian slave population. Farther east, from what was known as the "slave coast" and today comprises Togoland, Dahomey, and western Nigeria, were brought the *Cotocolis*, "who inhabit the kingdom of *Coto*," the *Popos*, the *Fidas*, and the *Ardras;* while from the interior of the west coast the *Fonds*, the *Maïs*, the *Aoussas*, the *Ibos*, and the *Nagos* are mentioned. Slaves from Benin, in the Niger Delta, as well as the *Mokos* and other tribes of Calabar, were also present in Haiti, though again in small numbers. The basin of the Congo River, how-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

ever, contributed not only many slaves called by the name of that river, but also the *Mayombés*, the *Mousombés*, and the *Mondongues*, though the "true Congos" — the *Franc-Congos* — are listed as having been derived from Angola. As for the rest of the continent, "One does not see at all in Santo Domingo any Africans who have come from the remainder of the west coast of Africa, which ends at the Cape of Good Hope. . . ."[3]

No final answer can be given about the extent to which these lists of tribal names may be regarded as valid, but the unanimity with which not only Charlevoix and St. Mery, but such other contemporary observers as Bryan Edwards for Jamaica, the Reverend C. G. A. Oldendorps for the Virgin Islands, John G. Stedman and Jan Jacob Hartsinck for Guiana — to name only four — recorded similar African regions and similar tribal names when writing of the slaves of other parts of the New World, offers strong corroborative testimony. Moreover, the fact that every tribal designation given in the lists of Charlevoix and St. Mery can be found on present-day maps of Africa in the approximate region they had indicated confirms the accuracy of these early lists.

The characteristics of the various types of Negroes recorded by Charlevoix and St. Mery are not without interest. The Senegalese are described as tall and well made, and of an ebony color, their noses almost as straight as those of whites, their hair less tightly curled than that of other Negroes. They had the reputation of possessing a superior morality and were deemed warrior-like. St. Mery had nothing but the highest praise for the Senegalese slave.

> "He is a farmer, intelligent, good, faithful even in love, understanding, and makes an excellent domestic. Living on millet, maize, and rice, he is very sober, excellent in caring for animals, discreet, and above all taciturn, a quality sufficiently rare among the Africans and

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

which one does not find often enough even among civilized peoples."

Not all of the Mohammedan slaves, however, had the desirable qualities of the Senegalese. The Bambara, for example, were depicted as insolent and not always to be trusted, as the designations " those who steal turkeys " and " those who steal sheep " would seem to indicate.

The people between Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast were known as a hardy group prone to revolt and desertion; they were not held desirable as slaves, and thus it is not strange that few of them were found in the colony. A similar appraisal was made of the Gold Coast Negroes, for while they were described as generally well made and intelligent, they were also assessed as unreliable, deceitful, lazy, given to flattery, great consumers of food, drunkards, and wantons. And as for the Fanti and the Mina, they were spoken of as " extremely proud, waging constant warfare, capricious, and ready at any time to commit suicide."

The Negroes of the Slave Coast were favorites in Santo Domingo. Their characteristic lighter skin-color, to be observed at the present time in their peculiar yellowish or reddish hue, confirms their provenience. They were thought intelligent but avaricious, and were designated as " eaters of dogs." The Ardra women, " continuous talkers," and quarrelsome, were rarely employed as domestics, since the Negroes from the region of Dahomey apparently learned French with the greatest of difficulty, so that to understand their speech was considered to be the greatest test " for those who flatter themselves that they have command of Créole."

The Ibos were found excellent for work in the fields, yet difficult to manage, for the slightest fault-finding or ridicule caused them to commit suicide,

" the idea of which, far from terrifying them, seems to hold an attraction for them, for they believe in the trans-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

> migration of souls. Too often it has come about that the *Ibos* of a given plantation have agreed all to hang themselves, in order to return to their country."

So well recognized was this tendency of the Ibo slaves to commit suicide, that they were described in Créole by the formula: "*Ibos pend' cor' a yo* — The Ibos (are those who) hang themselves." None the less, many slaves from this tribe were acquired. Their strong communal and tribal ties made it advantageous for those who owned them to obtain more of them, since newcomers "were accorded help, care, and instruction by those who had preceded them."

According to St. Mery, the Negroes most common in the colony came from the Congo coast and Angola, and were known by the generic term *Congos*. The *Franc-Congos*, who came from the kingdoms of Congo and Angola, were

> "of a docility and gayety that makes them much desired. Loving song, dance, and ornaments, they make excellent domestics, while their intelligence, their facility in speaking a pure Créole, their jovial countenances without markings . . . cause people to prefer them for house-servants; they also make good laborers and good fishermen."

That the large numbers of Congo Negroes imported into Haiti have left no more of the elements of their culture in the island than are found is perhaps due to this very devotion to their masters, for a lively tradition of the present tells how, during the slave revolts, the Congo Negroes most often remained on the side of their masters and most often betrayed their fellows.

Not all the Negroes from the Congo area were as amiable as these just mentioned. The *Mondongos* had "the most execrable excess of eating their fellows." This quotation gains special significance because of the prominence which it has

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

been given through its use to substantiate the many charges of cannibalism in Haiti that have been made. Yet those who, desirous of establishing such cannibalism, quote this passage from St. Mery do not always remember to quote it in its complete context:

> "Some of these butchers of human flesh are also brought to Santo Domingo . . . where, as in Africa, they are the horror of the other Negroes, notably of the Congos, who, because of their nearness to them [in Africa], are most exposed to their cruelties." [4]

These are thus the tribes who were presumably the most important in the Negro ancestry of the Haitians of today. Was there any least common denominator in language which made it possible for slaves fresh from Africa to communicate with one another after their arrival in Haiti? Was there sufficient similarity in their cultures so that this might form the basis for a retention of African beliefs and behavior despite the vicissitudes of slavery? And what were the characteristics of the African civilizations of these people?

The picture of West African life, as it is commonly drawn, emphasizes the great number of small tribal groups following dissimilar modes of life, speaking mutually unintelligible languages, and worshipping different gods. In a very general sense this is not untrue. On the face of it, the number of languages that are spoken in the area from which the slaves were derived would seem to have constituted an effective barrier not alone to any concerted action on the part of slaves, but even to communication between them, especially since in many regions of the New World it was a fixed policy to separate slaves from the same tribe.

Yet behind this semblance of sharp dissimilarities lies a basic unity of language and culture in all of West Africa, so that though languages were and are mutually unintelligible, structurally and idiomatically they are much the same. This

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

is why Créole, not alone in Haiti, but also in Martinique, in Trinidad, and in Louisiana, like Negro English in other portions of the New World, shows such consistency in structure and idiom. The slaves, having mastered a requisite number of words in the language of their masters, merely poured them into this mold of their own linguistic patterns and, approximating the phonetic values of such words in terms of the West African modes of speech, thus established a means of communication between one another, no matter what their tribal derivation.[8]

The region of West Africa which furnished the slaves was an area of great and settled political entities. Here were to be found the Fula and Mandingo empires in the western portion of the area, and the Hausa kingdom in northern Nigeria; the Ashanti and Fanti states in the Gold Coast, and, to the east, the kingdoms of Dahomey, of Yoruba, and of Benin; southward, those of Kongo and Loango. In all this vast territory law and order reigned, and regimentation of behavior under the direction of kings and priests was the rule. With this went a discipline that so deeply stamps African tradition that even the many years of European dominance have not been able to efface it.

The social life in this area, as well as its political organization, is to a very considerable extent a unit. Polygyny, the institution whereby a man may have more than one wife, is found in the entire region. Everywhere descent is counted on one side of the family, either the male or the female, and the larger significant relationship groupings that are composed of those who regard themselves as descended from a single and often mythical totemic ancestor are equally characteristic. Discipline rules within the family as well as outside it and is exacted from the earliest days in the life of a child. Needless to say, it is a far cry from this ordered state of society to the disorganized life which the stereotype of the "savage African" envisages.

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

191 271 567 Despite the influence of Mohammedanism in the north, there are certain similarities in religion to be found everywhere. Even among the Mohammedans, magic is as potent as it ever was, and as St. Mery correctly observed for his time regarding the Mohammedan slaves, the aboriginal gods have by no means been forgotten. On the west coast and in the Congo, however, pagan religions having a degree of complexity which accords with the complexity of the other aspects of these civilizations are found everywhere. Magic constitutes only one aspect of these systems in which pantheons of deities, each pantheon and each member of each pantheon with its special function, are held to control the destinies of the world and of man. The ancestral cult is another important aspect of West African belief, with the spirits of the dead envisaged as living on in another world, yet alert to manifest power for good or evil among their descendants. Not only in cosmology, but in ceremonialism as well are there patterns that characterize all West Africa. The worship of the gods through the dance, and the phenomenon of possession of devotees by their deities; the place of song in worship, and the special character of this music; the use of drums and other percussion instruments such as the rattle and iron gong in religious rites; these again are elements which all slaves in Haiti, no matter what their tribal affiliations, had in common.

171 174 [567] Nevertheless, as one studies Haitian folk-custom and folk-belief today, recognizable survivals of traits from the cultures of all the tribes that have been named are not to be found in anything approaching a comparable degree. Little of Senegalese practice is to be seen at present, while similarly, at least in the valley of Mirebalais, far less Congo derivatives can be discerned than would be expected when the vast number of Congo slaves imported into Haiti are recalled. Practically no traces of Gold Coast or Ivory Coast custom and belief are discoverable; the word "Ibo" appears from time to time, and several Ibo gods are worshipped; Nago deities, as will be seen,

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

CHAPTER II

WHAT THE SLAVES FOUND IN HAITI

THOUGH by the time of the French Revolution "the immense army of slavery had increased to such proportions that in the face of it the white world seemed reduced to a mere handful of men,"[1] this was by no means the case in the earliest days of the colony of Santo Domingo. As late as 1681 the whites outnumbered the Negroes almost three to one,[2] and it is not until a hundred years later that, in the words of St. Mery, there were "eleven and three tenths slaves for one white."[3]

Yet in the fashioning of the present-day culture of the Haitian peasants, this "mere handful," exerted an influence out of all proportion to its size. That this should have occurred is not strange in view of the relationship between Negroes and whites, which was that between slaves and masters; that it did occur is amply shown in the contemporary accounts of Haitian and West Indian life, which tell us how the Negroes everywhere made conscious efforts to achieve the standards of those who to them represented power, wealth, and position. But while the prestige of the master-class must be acknowledged, care must be taken not to accept uncritically an assumption that has colored many accounts of the lives of primitive peoples who have come into contact with European

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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his freedom for ten thousand *livres*, "which," an official report stated, "will be used to build prisons in the Cul-de-Sac." Another did so well in his new home that, though his past was known, he was never molested and died the owner of twenty-two Negro slaves.[7] Others who came to Haiti were sent there for reasons of waywardness, or because they had been involved in escapades that threatened trouble for them or their families, or because, showing no aptitude for gainful employment, their relations chose to send them to the colony rather than to be burdened with their support. Of these early colonists de Vassière says, with apparent justification: "In truth the morale and the manners of this population were what they might be supposed to have been, execrable."[8]

These categories, however, do not give the full tale of the non-Negro peoples who eventually contributed of their blood to the present-day Haitian population. In the earliest times the Spaniards sold white as well as Negro slaves to the New World, as numerous *assientos* testify. Before the time of French control of the western portion of the island, Haiti must have received her proportion of these unfortunates.[9] French women, many of them women of the streets, some mere girls who had come from convents, were imported in the early days to encourage the buccaneers and the filibusters to lead a more settled life.[10] In 1696, when the French abandoned the island of St. Croix, its inhabitants, both masters and slaves, were transported to Haiti, there to re-establish themselves on land allotted to them by the government.[11] Acadians from Newfoundland were landed at the Mole St. Nicholas in 1764, and, as has been mentioned, some of them were eventually settled in the valley of Mirebalais, there to disappear after a few years.[12] At about the same time, in accordance with a policy of increasing the white population, 2,470 Germans were brought to the island. Unlike the Acadians, these people thrived and developed an extensive cultivation of coffee, and their colony was in a healthy state at the time of the French

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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baths or public halls, were in operation, while in the towns of Cap Français, Port-au-Prince, Leogane, Saint-Marc, and Cayes, theaters were established which produced "the latest plays from Paris" and attracted large audiences.[39]

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Despite all this, the canker of homesickness constantly gnawed at the colonists even in the towns — the feeling that a stay in the colony was only for the interval needed to allow a man to escape to the mother country with a fortune. On the estates the loneliness and isolation of plantation life are commented upon repeatedly. A letter of the period, without place or date, found in the family papers of the historian de Vassière, discusses this with poignancy:

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"Have pity for an existence which must be eked out far from the world of our own people. We here number five whites, my father, my mother, my two brothers, and myself, surrounded by more than two hundred slaves, the number of our negroes who are domestics alone coming almost to thirty. From morning to night, wherever we turn, their faces meet our eyes. No matter how early we awaken, they are at our bedsides, and the custom which obtains here not to make the least move without the help of one of these Negro servants brings it about not only that we live in their society the greater portion of the day, but also that they are involved in the least important events of our daily life. Should we go outside our house to the workshops, we are still subject to this strange propinquity. Add to this the fact that our conversation has almost entirely to do with the health of our slaves, their needs which must be cared for, the manner in which they are to be distributed about the estate, or their attempts at revolt, and you will come to understand that our entire life is so closely identified with that of these unfortunates that, in the end, it is the same as theirs. And despite whatever pleasure may come from that almost ab-

1: Herskovits E-4, 8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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solute dominance which it is given us to exercise over them, what regrets do not assail us daily because of our inability to have contact and correspondence with others than these unfortunates, so far removed from us in point of view, customs, and education." [11]

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This letter speaks of the presence of five whites. The psychological state of the planter who, unmarried and alone, spent his days without the companionship of a fellow-being who as much as shared a common language with him may well be

vailing sense of caste was so strong that while these ate with the head of the estate, they did not live under the same roof, for they were subordinates and were treated as such. For his most constant companions the owner had his house-servants, unless he maintained a mulatto concubine who cooked his food and looked after his personal wants, shared his confidences, and reported to him any disaffection on the part of the Negro slaves. It is understandable that, having made his fortune, the planter did not delay his return to France, where, once back in Paris, he lived lavishly on the revenues from his estates; and letters in the Ministry of Colonies show the extent to which this phenomenon of absentee ownership characterized pre-Revolutionary Santo Domingo."

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Haiti being thought of as but an interlude in a man's life, the loosening of moral tone so complained of in contemporary works resulted, and with this went the many forms of display in which these colonists indulged and those other aspects of colonial custom which were so often ridiculed by European travelers of the period. The distance of Haiti from Paris, or, in a later period, the time which had elapsed since the French loss of Haiti, has, however, lent an enchantment to "Créole life" which is reflected in an idealized portrayal of this existence, much in the manner of the effusions on the graciousness and glamour of life in what is termed "the old South." [12] One

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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cannot read the extended narrative of the young Comte de C***, reprinted by de Vassière, without questioning this myth of the idyllic life of the Haitian Créole, even though allowing for the disdain with which an exiled Parisian dandy of 1730 would regard the inhabitants of outlying possessions, and allowing also for the savory wit of the man, which undoubtedly led him to underscore the more diverting situations which he encountered.[38]

Mention must be made at this point of the two great divisions of the white population which, as the colonizing period continued, were created by the distinction between those born on the island and those who had migrated there. These divisions cut across the two categories of urban and country dwellers, both of which numbered Haitian-born and native European members. At the time of the French Revolution about three quarters of the whites on the island had been born outside the colony, while of those born in the colony, women comprised the major portion.[39] Haitian-born persons were known by the designation *Créole*, which, according to a definition of the period, included all those " who have first seen the light of day in Santo Domingo " and was, as it is today, a term employed in all the West Indies and in Louisiana.[40] This designation was by no means restricted to the whites, however, for there were Créole Negroes as well as Créole whites; at the present time in Haiti a distinction is even drawn between locally grown " créole " rice and that which is imported!

It is common knowledge that slavery not only affects those who are held in bondage, but deeply influences the master-class as well. In Haiti the role played by the institution of slavery in the formation of the character and personalities of Créole children brought up in a setting of servility, cupidity, brutality, and terror must have been of the utmost importance. The bad temper and domineering nature of Créole youths is commented on again and again by writers of the period. Owing to the unhealthy climate and the failure to

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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maintain adequate hygienic conditions, the health of these children was usually poor, so that from earliest infancy they were spoiled by their parents and servants; their least wishes were gratified, and their least complaints immediately rectified so as to make them petty tyrants in their households. This tyranny was most often exercised over the family slaves. Regardless of the assiduous care these young despots received, and despite the adulation lavished upon their young charges, the Negro servants were seldom sufficiently prompt or adequate in their attentiveness to escape the punishments, often severe, that were meted out to them at the behest of their young masters. This tyranny extended to the play-life of the young Haitian-born white. Surrounded only by the slave children of the plantation, he commanded his contemporaries even more imperiously than his parents commanded the grown slaves.

> "Whatever he saw, he wanted, whatever was shown him he demanded; and if some fatality brought it about that one of his small companions resisted him and he became irritated, they would hurry from all sides in response to his cries and those of the young unfortunate, who, his color having destined him for submission, learned soon enough that he would be forced to give way, perhaps even being meted some punishment to penalize the disobedience of one who had not yet the instinct for servitude."[17]

175 563 567 591 [839] [157]

Grown to manhood, the young Créole continued to act as master of all he surveyed. Imperious, quick-tempered, spoiled, his life lived in large part among slaves, when his sex drive stirred, he took what slave women pleased him. Eventually he married, to be tormented with the thoughts of the possible infidelity of his wife; the more tortured because of his extreme vanity and because, while demanding faithfulness from his spouse, he was continuing his affairs with his Negro women. Yet he had some excellences of character, as well. "Frank,

1: Herskovits E-4,5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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affable, generous perhaps to the point of ostentation, confident, brave, a sure friend and a good father" [1] — such are his good points as set down by one who was perhaps surer-eyed than others in seeing his deficiencies, though these traits seem to have concerned more his relations with his fellow-whites than those which affected his bearing toward his Negro slaves.

The young Créole women of this same environment were destined for early marriage — too early for their best development, whether physical or mental. Given to exacting the fulfillment of their slightest caprices, they were, like their men, creatures of passion. If they survived their first pregnancies, which as a result of too early marriages often came before they were physically in condition to support the rigors of childbirth, they soon lost their youthful allure and became the unattractive women of the type so maliciously described by the Comte de C***.[2] In such cases they frequently survived not one but several husbands. Their associations were chiefly with their Negro women slaves, who were full confidantes, sleeping in the same chamber with their mistresses and on occasion sharing informal meals with them, though they never ate at the same table. And because, by a fine turn of irony, these Negro women were often at the same time the concubines of the husbands, brothers, or sons of their mistresses, they were as often as not treated alternately with the greatest tenderness and the harshest brutality.[3]

Whatever the inner life of white Haitians, native-born or Créole, outward ostentation was the rule. In the cities poorly furnished houses were cared for by a numerous retinue of uniformed retainers; "the supreme achievement for a European being to have himself served, he hires slaves while he waits for the time when he can own them."[4] In the country, too, life was lived on as lavish a scale as possible. This is not the place to describe the houses of masters and slaves, or the buildings needed for working sugar-cane or indigo or preparing coffee, or their distribution over the plantation, for su-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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The Haitian White Population]

175 merous contemporary accounts, and most present-day works,
105 give both texts and illustrations which make the economy of
563 the plantation clear.[33] Though many stories of the magnifi-
567 cence of plantation life are found in current works, writers
342 of the period seem to agree that but little attention was paid
to convenience. Inventories of the contents of houses show
175 that furnishings were at a minimum; a few chairs and small
105 tables in the sitting- and reception-rooms, beds and minor ac-
563 cessories in the way of furniture in the bedrooms, dining-room
352 tables and chairs and a cabinet for dishes. These pieces were usually built in the colony and made of native hard woods; substantial, they were essentially plain. As Baron Wimpffen remarked, "Taste, Sir, is still Creolian at Saint Domingo; and, unfortunately, the Creolian is not the right taste, — it smells too much of the *Boucan*."[34]

175 The table set was not distinguished. Meat, though the most
105 important dish at the principal meals, was poor, but, on the
567 other hand, fish, game, and wild fowl were excellent, and the
563 best of French wines were available.[35] Whatever the fare, how-
342 ever, it was served in the grand manner, often on plate rather
352 than chinaware, and by the many liveried house-servants which every great establishment could boast. An account of the mode of service has been preserved in the reminiscences of one who, writing some years later of a repast served him in 1787, says: "There were many more of these domestics of both sexes than there were diners. I could but admire their attention to the smallest details of the service, the whiteness of their clothing, and the beautiful kerchiefs in the Créole manner elegantly arranged about the heads of the women. . . . But 291 all of them moved about on bare feet; this was the distinctive sign of slavery."[36]

175 As portrayed in contemporary works, Haitian white life is
181 seen to have been lived entirely in terms of material goods and
105 of display. Just as there was little intellectual life, so religion
771 was but a matter of form. One M. de Larnage, writing from
563

1; Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

[History of Haiti in 17th-18th centuries—The Haitian white population]

Petit-Goave on 25 June 1743, complains that it is unbelievable "what indifference the people of these districts have toward spiritual matters." [46] So little attention was paid to the rites of the Church that when the baptism of an infant was to be performed, it often proved difficult to find a godfather who had taken the sacrament, and many children were therefore never baptized. As might be expected, the churches were in a bad state, often having no more than earthen walls and floors, roofed with thatch, and being used as threshing-floors as well as places of worship. The description which Père Labat has given us of a church at Cap Français,[47] and of the manner in which the communicants conducted themselves during such services as were held, shows the decadence of the one religion that had any place among the white inhabitants. The clergy, too, reflected this same decadence. For though the early libertines who posed as priests were later replaced by members of such orders as the Jacobins, the Jesuits, and the Capucins, even this did not end the scandals that, from the first days of the establishment of the Catholic Church on the island, marked its ministrations.

What impression must the Negroes have obtained from their opportunities to observe the life of their masters? What patterns of behavior, what moral codes, what concepts of the way in which the Europeans regulated their own lives and, as officials, regulated the lives of others, must have been stamped on the minds of these Africans? That the present emphasis on the importance of wealth, or that a love of and demand for display, should characterize Haitian life of the cities today is not strange. Nor is it difficult to comprehend how certain other aspects of Haitian life that have so been underscored in the last half-century by those who have written of the Haitians should have developed from this initial stimulus — not to the extent to which this emphasis would lead one to believe, to be sure, but enough to give a basis for the exaggerations which have been published.[48]

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

CHAPTER III

WORKING THE AMALGAM

L75 S67 4c. 219

THE FIRST slaves brought to the New World — those Negroes needed, according to the familiar account, to replace the Indians who preferred death to bondage — reached Haiti in 1510.[1] The sanguine hope of the colonists that the labor of one Negro would be worth more than that of four Indians was, however, not borne out by experience, for the work of these slaves was far from satisfactory, and their death-rate was distressingly high.[2] Yet though they were found to be useless in the gold mines, their owners were more than compensated by the discovery that they made excellent laborers in the cultivation of sugar-cane and the making of sugar. So profitable was this, indeed, that Haiti, with the rest of the West Indies, came to be known as the "sugar islands," and it is recounted how "the magnificent palaces erected by Charles V at Madrid and Toledo were built solely from the revenues obtained from the monopoly of the crown on the importation of sugar from the Island of Espagnole."[3]

L75 S67

During these early times the fundamental rule of slavery in Haiti was laid down: "In all that has to do with slavery, custom is everything, the law is nothing."[4] In 1518 one Zuazo, a licentiate, writing to the King, stated that the control of Negro slaves depended entirely upon the treatment accorded them. "Some of those I found on my arrival were thieves,

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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while others had fled to the mountains; the first group I caused to be beaten, and cut off the ears of the others, and since then no complaint has been heard." [6] Charlevoix also tells of the brutal treatment of the early slaves; how the Negroes were given even less consideration than the Indians, since there was not only much greater difference in skin color between them and the whites than between the color of the Indians and the Europeans, but the added reason existed that

> " slavery, as far as the native Indians were concerned, was based solely on the right of the most powerful, whereas in the case of the Negroes, they having been bought and sold by their own people, it seemed that one need have less scruple in making them bear the full weight of their servitude." [6]

The rapidity with which the slave-trade grew, especially in the latter portion of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth, need not be stressed here. With the passage of the western part of the island into the hands of the French following the provisions of the treaty of Ryswick in 1697, and as a result of the picturesque but predatory activities of the buccaneers, who did much to demoralize the Spanish regime, French participation in the trade grew apace,[7] so that slightly more than a half-century later seven " companies " were engaged in carrying Negroes to the French possessions in the New World.[8] Though in the earlier decades of the eighteenth century Martinique was the best market, Haiti, because of her vast resources, came to absorb the greater part of the available slaves.[9]

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From the earliest times most of the slaves were destined for work in the fields, but some were employed as house-servants. These latter had the greatest opportunities to learn the ways of the whites and, moreover, since many of the women were mistresses of their owners, not only did a mingling of traditions and modes of life result, but a merging of

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

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the blood-streams of the two races as well. And though in the custom of French Santo Domingo, as elsewhere in the New World, even a suspicion of Negro ancestry was sufficient to cut a person off from social intercourse with white society, yet these mixed-bloods were to become an important factor in establishing the patterns of Haitian Negro tradition, just as their descendants were to exert no small influence in the development of Haitian culture after the establishment of independent Haiti.

Numerous terms designated the various degrees of crossing, some of which, surviving in present-day speech, are familiar to us, such as the words "mulatto" and "quadroon." But examining Moreau de St. Mery's painstaking analysis of the various possible amounts of crossing that could be recognized, reading his speculations regarding the smallest proportion of Negro blood that could be regarded as negligible, noting how he traces Negro blood to its last vestige, as in a cross which would give one part Negro as against 8,191 parts white, a telling impression is received of the great significance of race-crossing for the Haitians of that time.[10] Such words as *sacatra*, *griffe*, *marabou*, *métif*, and *mamelouc* not only gave information as to the amount of crossing represented in the persons designated by them, but even indicated which parent, father or mother, was white and which one was wholly or partially Negro. Crossing was by no means restricted to matings between white masters and their slave women, for records show that Negro men did not fail to hold an attraction for their white mistresses. Nor did all the sharpness with which the color-line was drawn prevent actual marriages between whites and persons of color. In such instances, however, the white person was cast out from association with his fellow-Europeans, as the name applied to him, *mésallié*, sufficiently shows.[11]

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Slavery cut across all these varying degrees of color, so that just as there might be free Negroes who were wholly African

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

in descent, so there were "colored" folk who were slaves. As time went on, the lighter-colored slaves were usually employed as house-servants rather than field-hands, bringing about a continuous dilution of the Negro blood that flowed in these strains, and a lightening of their skins. And such was the prestige attached to light color that the mixed-bloods, even though slaves, felt themselves superior to free Negroes of undiluted African stock. This attitude derived from the fact that the lighter slaves were most often manumitted, particularly if they were the children of their owners, and that in other situations, when as slaves they gained the favor of their masters, they were permitted to engage in some remunerative enterprise with the proceeds of which they eventually might purchase their own freedom. These free people of color, or *affranchis*, formed an important part of the Haitian population in pre-Revolutionary times,[13] and played a principal role in the development of Haitian culture. It was through them that European civilization flowed, since because of the closeness of their contacts with the whites they were the instrument by means of which the aboriginal African heritage of the slaves was modified to produce the forms in which it is found in Haiti today.[13]

Yet for all the importance of the freed mixed-bloods in the attainment of Haitian independence and in the fixing of the patterns of Haitian culture, they, like the whites, were but relatively few in number, their strength being but from five to ten per cent of that of slaves.[14] In attempting to analyze the manner in which the present amalgam that is the civilization of Haiti was formed, it is consequently necessary to revert to a consideration of those who were in the majority, the full-blooded Negroes. The tribes from which these Negroes were principally derived have been indicated, together with the outlines of the civilizations of the region of Africa from which they were drawn. To this must be added, as has been for the whites with whom they came in contact, an analysis of the so-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

cial classes to which they belonged, as well as the circumstances of their enslavement, their treatment in Africa before shipment to the New World and during the voyage, their initiation into their new mode of life, and the manner in which they lived as slaves, since all of these facts had considerable bearing on the processes which shaped the behavior of their descendants who now inhabit the island.

The integrated political organization of West Africa has been described, as well as the important fact that the class stratification in that region was almost as fixed and its social implications almost as far-reaching as in France. Even the early writers recognized that not all slaves came from the same ranks of society, just as they understood that there were various ways in which enslavement could be achieved. Père Labat, who lived in the West Indies for many years, listed four classes from which slaves were drawn. First, he says, were those whose punishments against native law had been commuted to perpetual banishment — that is, to slavery " for the private profit of the kings "; second were the prisoners of war; third were those who, already the slaves of native princes or of those persons to whom they had been given by these princes, were sold to meet the need of their masters for money; while fourth, comprising the greatest proportion of the slaves, were those snatched from their homes by the marauding bands of robbers who, with the connivance of native rulers, carried on these raids to satisfy the demands of the European dealers.[18] This classification and others of the period, though generally accepted and repeated by later writers, tells little concerning the ranks of society from which the slaves were drawn, except as this may be inferred. For this one must go to present-day West Africa, where a lively tradition of the slave-trade has survived and offers valuable supplementary information.[19]

In the light of the existing traditions in Dahomey and Nigeria, it is evident that from the point of view of the African, Labat's four classes must be compressed into two — the

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

"The Mina Negroes have even been seen to recognize princes of their country . . . prostrating themselves at their feet and rendering them that homage whose contrast to the state of servitude to which these princes have been reduced in the colony offers a striking enough instance of the instability of human greatness." [17]

Yet another group of Africans played a significant role in determining the trends Haitian Negro culture was to take. It is a commonplace among those who have studied New World Negro life that African religion has shown greater resistance to white influence than any other phase of African culture. And to explain this one must again turn to native African tradition. The beginnings of the West African monarchies, whose ruling dynasties eventually came to command great stretches of land, were in tiny principalities that continually "warred" against each other. Tradition has it that the most intransigent of the conquered were the priests of the indigenous local cults, who, because of their activities, were punished with what native idiom still terms "banishment." In the New World these intractable priests continued their rites for their fellow-slaves and instructed the next generation so their knowledge would not be lost to the people. Before their enslavement they had been men of power and influence, and this pattern, carried over in all its strength in the New World, continued them and their descendants as natural leaders. Hence, wherever the opportunity presented itself to strike for liberty, they invoked the spiritual forces to reinforce the power and courage of the military leaders who, like them, had been sold into slavery because their countries had been conquered, or because they had rebelled against the succession in their own lands.

The composition of the slave population as inferred from these traditions is thus seen to be somewhat different from

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

that commonly assumed, since the conclusion is inescapable that, if anything, the slaves formed a group whose aboriginal types showed a weighting on the upper end of the African social scale rather than an overwhelming proportion of the less desirable members of society. Such an assumption goes far in explaining how the "slave psychology" generally attributed to Negroes of the New World was anything but a real part of their inner lives, and makes as well for an understanding of the extent to which the Negroes suffered their slavery with a constantly active discontent that is rarely given proper recognition in the study of the history of the period, and to which the drive toward freedom and the traditions of their native land were kept alive despite the restraints imposed by the masters.

Once in the net of the slavers, however, the status of any individual mattered but little, for to the European dealers each Negro was but an added unit of cargo. All last traces of his dignity as a human being were taken from him;[18] in the grants for earlier slaving operations, and in the manifests of the ships of that time, slaves were not even invoiced as human beings, but as "pieces of the Indies" — fractions of the perfect slave, who was conceived as having a height of seven *quartas* of a little more than ten inches each. Under this practice, the stature of each slave, child or adult, having been recorded, the total length of the members of the cargo was divided by the requisite number, and thus reduced to so many of these "pieces of the Indies," the actual number of human beings in the cargo not figuring.[19]

It is unnecessary to detail the horrors of the passage to the New World, for the story has been too often told. One can but conjecture what its effect on those subjected to it must have been, especially when it is viewed as an introduction to their contact with the Europeans who were to be their masters. That the mortality on the voyage was high is well known, but death encountered while the shackled slaves passed the dan-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

gerous bar of the African coast in the native canoes, which often overturned in the surf, is seldom mentioned in the literature of the slave-trade. Yet this was perhaps as great a cause of loss of life as the hardships of the journey to the coast or even the voyage across the Atlantic.

Arrived at their destination, the slaves were given a period of rest so that they might be in the best of condition when they were placed on the market, to be inspected much as the more costly horses or heads of cattle were appraised. Sometimes the period between the voyage and their purchase was a lengthy one, since they were often held in "warehouses" for extended periods in order to regulate the market. Eventually, however, they were disposed of and, taken to the plantations, branded with the mark of the new master.[20] Induction into plantation life followed a fairly definite pattern: the new slave was first of all "introduced" to the principles of Christianity through an interpreter and then, according to his age, placed in one of the three work-groups which every plantation of any size possessed; the "great" one, composed of the most vigorous men and women; the second, to which the adolescents, the feeble, and the women who were nursing their infants were assigned; and the third, made up of children, who, under the watchful eye of an elderly woman, gathered forage. For the second and third groups the work was not too strenuous, but the members of the "great" work-group labored almost without rest except for the two hours a day allowed for meals and the few hours at night for sleep. And while conditions varied from plantation to plantation, the many contemporary accounts of the unrelenting manner in which the slaves were compelled to work at top speed testify to the harshness of the regime.[21] Small wonder that Charlevoix, contemplating the life of the slaves, wrote the moving paragraphs he composed concerning the hardships of their existence, and the slight compensations their labor afforded them.[22]

Despite the obvious fact that under such conditions the con-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

tinuation of African cultural traditions was not easy, certain things did persist. While the material facts of the life of the slaves was at once subordinated to European patterns — in dress and implements and to a certain extent in housing, for example [25] — yet in other matters they could live as they had lived in Africa. Thus one account of the time, quoted by de Vassière,[26] tells how the slaves carried on communal hoeing, timing their strokes to the rhythms of songs that begged some favor of their visitor, or to songs of praise (and, when the white observer was not present, undoubtedly also singing songs of derision), in the characteristic African fashion that, as will be seen, has survived in Haitian peasant life to this day. Similarly their traditions of cooking, of eating, of fixing the time for their meals (despite St. Mery's comment that "the Negro has no other rule of eating than the demands of his appetite"), of respect for their elders; their attitudes toward death and their rituals of burial, their dances, their songs, and, above all, their non-Christian religious beliefs, all continued to be stamped with the mark of Africa.[28] On the other hand, opportunities to learn and imitate French customs were by no means neglected, for the prestige of the masters filtered through the ranks of the slaves until it reached even the field-hands, for the nearer in service the Negro was to the person of his master, the more Europeanized was his behavior and the prouder he was and the more he exploited his opportunities to follow European patterns of habit.[29] Not only did the house-servants imitate French dances,[27] but we are told how in Martinique, for example, all the slaves were taught these figures.[30] In the field of religion, also, the efforts of the Church to capitalize the royal edicts which made baptism of the slaves compulsory were far from vain, at least in so far as the outward manifestations of their acceptance of the faith were concerned. Writings of the time, however, do not omit comment on the discouragement of the missionizing Fathers who seriously undertook this task, because too often

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

the baptism of their converts was followed by serious lapses from the faith, especially under conditions of stress.[39]

One of the most revolting aspects of the institution of slavery, wherever found, is the cruelty with which the suppression of human individuality is prosecuted. In this the French colony of Santo Domingo was no exception, as the list of more ingenious punishments, aside from the more usual ones such as whipping, which were devised to keep the slaves in line, demonstrates.[40] What is more important here are the defenses the Negroes built up against them. Recourse to suicide was especially common, and though the popularly accepted explanations for this range between the desire of the slave to destroy himself because he knew he was valuable property of his master, and the conviction that suicide was one way of achieving his return to the African homeland,[41] there is no reason to assume that, following African tradition, the belief that the ghost of a helpless slave could through suicide become powerful for evil and thus wreak his vengeance did not also figure.[42] But equally widespread in all the New World were the allied weapons of revolt and escape.

Both in the experience of the individual slaves and in the history of New World slavery this tendency to revolt began early. In the former case, many tales are told of how on the march to the African coast, or in the slave barracoons, or on board the slave-ship, the possibility of a desperate dash for freedom had always to be guarded against.[43] Concerning the latter, it is not generally known how early in the history of Negro slaving revolts did occur. The Negro slave-trade began with shipments of slaves to Haiti in 1510; the first slave uprising in Haiti, in 1522, thus took place only twelve years after the commencement of the traffic.[44] In the New World possessions of Spain eleven other rebellions are recorded between the years 1522 and 1553, of which those of 1533, 1537, and 1548 occurred in Santo Domingo.[45] During the following century two revolts took place, one at Port de Paix in 1679

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

and another in 1691. The object of this latter rebellion was to massacre all the whites in the district, but it was discovered before the uprising could be effective, and its leaders were executed. Still another incipient revolt in the region of Cap Français was put down in 1704.[86]

In the main, however, there were too few opportunities for united action on the part of the slaves from any considerable area to permit the idea of a general revolt to germinate and grow into action; such rebellions as occurred in the years that followed were local affairs, and were principally the result of specific abuses. Yet the fear of them was always with the planters, and of this fear the *vodun* cult, characterized by St. Mery as being potentially "a terrible weapon" in the hands of the leaders of the cult, was the symbol and crystallizing agent.[87] That there was no lack of realization of the danger to the colonists from slave uprisings is made clear in letters of the period written to France; as early as 1685 M. de Cussy, reporting to the Minister of Colonies in Paris, stated: "In the Negroes we possess a formidable domestic enemy," while a hundred years later an officer of the armies of the King who was also a plantation-owner in Haiti expressed the opinion that "a colony of slaves is a city under constant threat of assault; there one walks on barrels of powder."[88]

More frequently, however, the expression of protest took the form of *marronage*, of running away to the hills, a phenomenon not restricted to Haiti, since in other regions of the New World, notably Jamaica and Dutch Guiana, the runaways maintained themselves so successfully that they were accorded their independence by formal recognition, as was also done in Haiti in 1784.[89] Figures on the extent to which slaves made off into the mountains tell the measure of their desperation; in 1720 alone, a thousand Negroes gained their freedom in this manner; in 1751, at least 3,500. Some of the leaders of these bands were men of great ability, and the depredations they engaged in caused serious losses to the planters

1: Herskovits E-4, 8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

in the regions where they operated. The most renowned was Macandal, a "Guinea" Negro, who was finally apprehended and executed in 1758.[40] His name lives today in Haitian peasant tradition, where folkloristic versions of his exploits as one of the earliest of the liberators are still recounted. The pages in St. Mery which tell how the strength of the bands in the mountains behind Croix-des-Bouquets necessitated a constant augmentation of the militia on duty there, is additional evidence of the success of these runaways. The same author's description of a group operating in the parish of Jacmel, found in 1785 to number among its members men more than fifty years of age who had been born in the freedom of the mountains, shows how long the escaped Negroes were able to maintain themselves without capture.[41]

The very tradition of *marronage* was important. Psychologically, it held out to the slaves a hope, more than ephemeral, of escaping their servitude, and in consequence allowed them to maintain an attitude of mind that kept many of them from becoming a prey to despair. From the point of view of the growth of Haitian culture, moreover, the groups of runaway slaves offered a ready means for the continuation of African traditions and patterns of behavior. Though but few descriptions of the manner of life led by the fugitives in their mountain encampments are to be had, it is apparent that in order to maintain confidence in their own powers of resisting capture and re-enslavement the runaways guarded assiduously all memory of African belief and practice, while even in the material aspects of their existence they tended to revert to aboriginal modes of life. Finally, however, and most important for the future course of Haitian history, was the training of these runaways obtained in the ways of warfare, and the continuation of the warrior tradition among the Negroes. This is one of the reasons why in 1791, when Boukman and his followers stirred the first general slave revolt in the north, the blacks were ready; also when in the course of

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

the development of European history the French Revolution sharpened the latent antagonisms between the various classes of whites in the colony, between the whites and the free persons of color, and between masters and slaves, the way had been prepared for the operations of the great military geniuses, Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe, through whose leadership the freedom of Haiti was finally achieved.

It is not necessary here to give, even in outline, the course of Haitian history during this period of rebellion and afterwards, when Haiti was welded into a single Republic, for this has been often recounted.[62] Nor is it of importance here to continue the well-known political history of the Republic, with its many rebellions, and its wars with the Spanish portion of the island that finally resulted in the formation of the Republic of Santo Domingo; with the brief existence of the "empire" of Faustin I; and with the culmination of this history in what has been called a period of anarchy that brought about the occupation, so recently terminated, of Haiti by the American Marines.[63] Other questions, which concern the social history of independent Haiti, have been given less attention, and only tantalizing hints of their answers appear in the writings of those who have treated of the developing country. How were the impulses toward the mingling of Haitian and French aspects of culture, set in motion during the period of slavery, working out during this time? What influences dominated the scene, once the whites had been finally eliminated? What mechanisms permitted the African traditions brought by the slaves to hold their vitality? It is as through a haze that one glimpses the inner development of Haitian culture after independence; and the glimpses are the dimmer when comparison is made with the many clear and detailed descriptions of the earlier life of the island.

It is only by a close reading of the works of such travelers and foreign officials as Hanna, Mackenzie, St. John, and Hazard, that any information of this kind can be obtained. The

1: Herskovits E-4,5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

attitudes of these writers were in the main far from sympathetic toward Haiti, and their interests extended but little to the customs of the great masses of Haitians. That the fear of slavery was still alive in the early part of the nineteenth century is apparent from an incident related by Mackenzie; [44] that, some decades later, the sense of racial differences continued to exist is evident from folk-sayings about the characteristics of whites, mulattoes, and Negroes recorded by St. John.[45] The concept of rank seems to have maintained itself in its full flavor, with no lack of social classes in Haitian urban society and no lack of vigor in perpetuating the earlier prejudices of caste.

The majority of the population remained on the land, for by 1830 the great estates had been completely broken up, and were cultivated in the main by small concessionaires. The dress of these country inhabitants seems to have remained much as it had been under French control, and the emphasis on good manners that so marks African social intercourse had been retained to such an extent that St. John, no admirer of the Haitian people, was forced to remark upon it.[46] Markets which were conducted in African fashion had been established, and these were supplemented by itinerant peddlers. The institution of *placage*, a reconciliation of African plural marriage with the monogamy of European custom, of which more will be said in a later chapter, was known in the early days of independence. The rites of birth and death were marked with their special ceremonies, and in both instances it can be seen that the African elements of the cultural heritage were not being forgotten. Dancing continued as the principal form of recreation, and to the traditional dances, which still persist, were added European styles.[47]

Above all, African religious customs were being observed. *Vodun* rites continued to flourish and magic was practiced as in the days preceding independence, as is to be seen from the notorious and all too often repeated tale of the "Congo bean

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3 Mirebalais

585 munity. All others stay under the brush shelter which has been erected at the side of the house, where men are served the common drink of the Haitian peasant, *clairin*, raw rum. The feast, furnished by the bridegroom, includes beef, pork, and many fowls. "We do not eat badly at a wedding!" is the comment of Haitians. At the weddings of more prosperous folk there may be dancing, but no *vodun* dances are danced. "This is not a thing of *vodun*, but of the Church," is the explanation proffered.

The feasting begun, the bridal couple must submit to much speech-making. Long "lessons in morality" are pronounced by grandfathers, godfathers, and elderly male friends; in fact, anyone moved to speak expounds upon "the road to follow" for the good, the worthy life, and many a warning is given with moving examples of the fate of those who disregarded the counsel given them. The food and drinks consumed, the speech-makers silenced, and the dancers tired, the wedding guests begin to take leave, until by sundown many are gone, and soon the young couple find themselves alone.

175 595 567 That plural marriage has existed in Haiti since the time of independence is evident from the available accounts. Little can be learned of slave matings prior to 1804, but it may be assumed that these were in the main temporary and existed at the will of the masters; and while the practice of polygyny among the slaves must have been difficult, if only because of the greater proportion of males, the African pattern seems to have had enough vitality to bring about the re-establishment of the institution as soon as slavery was abolished. Thus, writing in 1830, Makenzie notes a man "not inaptly named 'Taureau'" who "though his means were small, and his cottage still smaller . . . had a harem of no less than six wives."[1]

175 595 St. John, some fifty years later, also remarks on the fact that

> "In the interior, a well-to-do black lives openly with several women as wives, and I have seen the patriarch

1: Herskovits E-4, 8 (1930) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Miscellaneous

Another deep-lying source of the attitude taken toward the Negro concerns his supposed readiness to suffer his slave status. To find the assertion that the Negro is a born servitor, best adapted to caring for those of a higher order in the biological world, it is not necessary to search among the statements of those who, before the Civil War, issued variations on this theme in support of their position. Yet otherwise why did the Negro accept his slave status to the extent to which he did? And, further, just how great was that acceptance? Again, in analyzing the material from Haiti, light is thrown on both questions. Slavery as an institution was one of the few patterns of his new life that rang familiar to past experience, for, as has been seen, slavery — and not necessarily household slavery, but that of the plantation variety which prevailed in the New World — was deeply ingrained in African tradition. Even then, once in the New World, certainly in Haiti and to a far greater extent than is ordinarily grasped elsewhere in the region where slaving prevailed, his acquiescence in his new status was but briefly held, if at all. The tale of slave revolts, beginning but a few years after the original introduction of slaves into Hispaniola and continuing there and elsewhere in the Caribbean, the Guianas, and North and South America until the abolition of slavery, has yet to be told. When it is realized that these rebellions were intermittent throughout the period and took place everywhere in the region; that they resulted in freedom for the Maroons of Jamaica and for the slaves who escaped from the plantations of Haiti before the French were expelled from the island, and in the eventual attainment of independence by the Haitians and, *de facto*, by the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana; and that everywhere they held the white population in terror of life and property, the significance of these episodes as pointing the error of current concepts concerning the inner make-up of the Negro is patent. Add to this the revolts of slaves in the barracoons of Africa itself, and on board the ships which

1: Herskovits E-4, 8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

brought them to the New World — "revolt insurance" was often carried by the masters of slave-ships — and the demonstration of the falsity of this concept of the Negro as a born slave is complete.

These ideas, however, are fundamental to the Negro problem as it exists at the present time. Admittedly, it is no simple matter to change points of view so generally held, especially when to the weight of economic drives is added the force exerted by the depth in tradition at which they lie. Nevertheless, when current attempts to solve the "Negro problem" come to mind, one is struck by the slight attention paid to such factors as these. Simple solutions, rapid in their operation, are almost invariably sought and inevitably rejected when immediate resolution of the difficulty is not forthcoming. Does it perhaps occur, again pointing lessons derived from the Haitian material, that there are forces of unrecognized power at work which derive from the elementary fact not only that, as has been stated, cultures in contact influence one another, but that in contact they exhibit far greater tenacity than is ordinarily credited them?

The cultural heritage of the African, it has been seen, was not a negligible one. In the entire area from which Africans were drawn it was of sufficient unity so that the differences between the behavior of peoples was but a gloss on the deeper resemblances between their traditions. The slaves were brought to the New World, North America as elsewhere, in great numbers, so that many persons from the same tribes remained in contact with each other. Even though this were not the case, no insuperable linguistic barriers existed. For as with cultures, so with languages; though mutually unintelligible, they were so based on the same grammatical constructions, and so presented the same idiomatic expressions, that the language of the masters spoken in the old patterns sufficed to preserve and hand on the traditions of the forefathers.

What of the belief in the United States that nothing of

2: Courlander B-S (1937-1968) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

to marry work to play, drudgery to singing, and despair to hope. In his complicated world, life and death are simply different aspects of the same thing. Those who die live as long as people remember them. And those who are alive in the physical sense are receptacles for the spiritual forces that exist on all sides—the echoes of the dead, the multitude of spirit beings, good and evil, and dancing and music.

What are the origins of this simple and complicated man?

The beginnings of the Haitian came with the discovery of America and the establishment of slavery in the New World. When the Spanish colonizers first began to organize the economy of the new colony of Hispaniola, as they called it, they attempted to enslave the indigenous Caribs to work the fields. But the Indians of Haiti found no sense and no comfort in the new system. It violated their views of life and destroyed their culture. They were proud, and they were not resilient. They did not care to pan gold for the Spaniards or to grow sugar for them. They died under the conditions of slavery, or fled into the mountains, or took to the sea in their canoes, looking for sanctuary on other islands where the Europeans had not yet settled. They left the rich earth of the Haitian valleys to the conquistadores. In less than eighteen years the new Spanish colony was dying on the vine for lack of laborers. It was then that Spain, like France, England, and Portugal, turned its eyes to Africa. There were old precedents. The Spanish and Portuguese had for many years used the African for labor. They had had intimate contact with Africans during the Moorish invasion of Iberia. And the slave trade had been an old and familiar thing even before the discovery of America.

The first Africans sent to Haiti arrived there in 1510. The precise origins of these first African immigrants to the New World are not known, but they came from somewhere along that long stretch of African coast between Senegal and Angola. It was a great crossroads in world history. As much as any other ethnic group, these Africans and those who came after them built America. They, as much as any other, turned the West Indies into a prize over which the nations of Europe fought for three hundred years. And in Haiti, as in Brazil, the United States, and other American nations, they raised moral and ethical issues for the peoples of European stock which have not been solved to our own day.

The acquisition and transportation of slaves is an old and familiar story. Slavery was an ancient institution in some parts of Africa. Some of the wars between kingdoms were, in part at least, huge slave raids. In other wars, the taking of slaves was only incidental. But the selling of these human chattels to European merchants came as easily to African chieftains as it did to Arab entrepreneurs. Often they were merely selling off

2: Courlander 8-6 (1937-1984) 1980 SV3 Haiti SV3

"surplus" stock. The African's motives sometimes were political rather than mercenary—to weaken and disperse unfriendly neighboring tribes. Occasionally, members of a royal family, possible contenders for tribal power and all the perrogatives that went along with it, were "exiled" in this extremely effective and final way. Although Africans were the victims of this monstrous commerce, it is clear that without the participation and coöperation of other Africans the slave trade as it existed in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries would not have been possible. The African, along with the Asian and the European, shares the guilt for the indecencies and degradation that grow out of human barter.

The voyage to the New World was at best horrible and inhuman. Nothing that can be said about the manner in which the captains of the slavers attempted to care for their cargoes can change the picture. The slaves suffered from thirst, disease, hunger, seasickness, and impersonal brutality. The anxiety and dread which these captives must have suffered in anticipation of things to come are difficult to imagine. A strange, unfamiliar world awaited them across an ocean larger than Africa itself. Some slaves killed themselves. Others who had survived long overland marches died of exhaustion or disease aboard the slave vessels. And many a slaver had to report in its log that a number of chained males, taking advantage of a brief spell on the upper decks, had leaped into the sea.

But among those who reached port in the New World there was a fierce determination to survive. The history of African slavery in the Americas is full of accounts of resistance and revolt against the European masters. The shipwrecked slaves who took over the Island of St. Vincent and came to be known as the Black Caribs, the Ashanti who revolted and vanquished the Dutch armed forces in Surinam, the Maroons of Jamaica, and the ex-slaves of Haiti who destroyed Napoleon's armies, all bear witness to the unquenched spirit of those millions of Africans exiled from their own land.

Whereas the Indians of Haiti were not resilient, the Africans were. More and more slaves were poured into Hispaniola. By the eighteenth century the slave population represented countless tribes and kingdoms of West Africa. There were Senegalese, Foulas, Poulards, Sosos, Bambarras, Kiambaras, Mandingos, and Yolofs from northwest Africa. There were Aradas, Mahis, Haoussas, Ibos, Anagos or Yorubas, Bini, Takwas, Fidas, Aminos, Pantis, Agouas, Sobos, Limbas, and Adjas from the coast and interior of the great bulge of Africa. From Angola and the Congo basin came the Solongos, the Mayombés, the Mousombés, the Moundongues, the Bumbas, the Kangas, and others. Although there is no official record, Haitians themselves say that there were also those tall

Courlander 9-6 (1927-1958) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

people known as the Jangheys, or Dinkas, from the region of the Upper Nile, and Baganda from Uganda.[1] A few proper names that have survived, such as Ras *Mélé*, suggest that there may have been men from Ethiopia among them. Old slavers' records show that numerous shipments were made from Madagascar and Mozambique on the East African coast.[2]

These transplanted people came from all classes and stations of life. Some were criminals condemned and sold by their own tribesmen; others were prisoners captured in intertribal raids or by Arab slave hunts. There were men of royal blood among them, as well as artisans and tribal scholars. The slave cargoes included leaf doctors, bards, musicians, wood carvers, metalworkers, drum makers, boatbuilders, hunters, and farmers.

In Haiti they were thrown together into a common mold. Shoulder to shoulder in the plantation fields were Bambaras, Anagos, Takwas, and Bumbas—peoples with different backgrounds, different languages, different legends, and different traditions. There were Moslems and so-called pagans, herdsmen and river-boatmen. Each of them brought something of his past and unwittingly poured it into the new amalgam that was to be the Haitian.

And into this amalgam flowed some of the literature, the traditions, the religious thoughts, and the superstitions of Europe. Under Spanish, French, and English rulers the slaves were constantly subjected to ways and ideas that were new to them. They absorbed and digested, and out of the diverse and even contradictory elements they worked out new patterns of life and thinking. This was the strength and resiliency of the West African in the New World. His capacity for adaptation and for remembering what was valuable to him and forgetting what had ceased to be useful preserved his spirit and his pride.

Among the things that were lost in this vast process of adaptation were the traditions of wood carving, bronze and brass casting, and weaving. Remembered, however, were music, dancing, games, religious beliefs, concepts of nature and the supernatural, folk tales, and legends. It was the outward, material things that were abandoned, and the inward, nonmaterial things that tended to survive.

The slave system itself was largely responsible for the loss of special arts and skills. Craftsmen with specialized knowledge in metalwork were set to repairing wagons and hoes, or they simply wielded hoes in the fields. Wood carvers found no patrons to encourage them to carve images and stools. The colonial emphasis was on mass production of sugar. Other things were valueless. There was little leisure or incentive for the slave to follow his artistic aptitudes.

[1] [The name Ganda survives in Haiti as the name of a deity. Cf. P. 349, Category 116.—Analyst]

[2] [For foot note, See Category 116, P. 349.—Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1837-1963) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

And yet the things that survived were able to do so, in certain respects, because of the particular brand of thinking of the colonial masters. Why has so much of the African past survived in Haiti when it has been all but obliterated in the United States? The answer lies primarily in the Catholic background of the Europeans who controlled the colony—first the Spanish, and then the French. The Catholic Church regarded every slave as a soul to be saved, as a complete and finished man except for salvation. And though it was an official of the Church who is alleged to have suggested African slavery in the New World,[2] the Church itself took the view that the differences between the slave owner and the slave were only worldly and transient things. The Church did not insist on washing out of the African mind everything that was there. It regarded its mission as that of supplying the single quality that was lacking—salvation. Its attitudes during the past four hundred years in Haiti have been vacillating and erratic; it has often pressed for destruction of the African cults; but on the whole it has been satisfied with conversion.

The Protestant churches in Haiti, on the contrary, have demanded that their converts become new people. They have forbidden their adherents to take any part in non-Christian rituals or other activities—including even the dance. They have presented them with a simple and painful choice.

These were the essential attitudes that prevailed during slavery days in the United States. In the beginning, while plantation owners fought against church activities among the Negroes, the church and the plantation owners were largely united in their war against "heathen" practices. Africanisms which might have either died in due course or persisted were stamped out with Puritan fervor. Significantly, it was in French-Catholic Louisiana that African-style drumming, singing, and dancing survived in the United States to the beginning of this present century.

The Catholic attitude of tolerance-by-necessity in Haiti won for it most of the country's four million souls. Today, many a Haitian who participates in the rites of Vodoun on Saturday worships in a Catholic chapel on Sunday.

Such sporadic efforts as were made to wipe out African memories in Haiti were unsuccessful. Slowly the uprooted slaves found a common denominator. The peoples of different origins developed a common language based on the French spoken by the masters. Their different religious systems merged one into another.

The necessity for adaptation and amalgamation produced a cultural hybrid of an energetic and vital kind. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the people of African descent in Haiti were a cultural alloy, fired

[2] [Bartolomé de Las Casas. Cf. p. 349, Category 116. --Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1985) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

rather starve than work. An Englishman, James Franklin, wrote in 1828, for example:

> Experiments may be tried, laws may be enacted, and encouragement given, but nothing short of coercion and want will impel the Haytian to labour; and I have my doubts as to the practicability of enforcing labour in Hayti until the people have been better instructed, and their characters become changed.

As Franklin summarized it: "Nature is too generous to the Haytian; he never wants, and so never works for hire, as do free labourers in other countries."[1]

The early nineteenth century saw a flood of such bitter comments about the remains of the once rich and flourishing French colony of St. Domingue. The vast productivity of Haiti under French rule had made that colony one of the richest in the New World. The country was dotted with sugar mills, brick-covered wells, and warehouses; and carefully built brick aqueducts, irrigation canals, locks, and dams assured water for the plantations. In 1790, under the slave system, Haiti had exported 163,000,000 pounds of sugar. In 1826, a quarter of a century after the revolution, it was reported to have exported 33,000 pounds.

This falling off in production and exports doubtless had many causes, but one of the most significant was the Haitian's revolt not only against slavery but also against continuing the same kind of work he had performed as a slave. He saw not too much difference between forced, unpaid labor and working for any large landholder at subsistence wages. To the Haitian slave the inspiring battle cry of the French Revolution did not mean that all men would work together on another's man plantation and receive the same wages. It meant that every man would have his own garden to work for himself as he chose; every man would be a full citizen, with land of his own, free to come and go, to plant what he wished, to sell what he could. Despite long years under a colonial slave system, the Haitian still remembered a different way of life in Africa, where mass production for export was not the primary objective of labor.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the population of Haiti was not much more than half a million—less than one sixth of what it is today. There was plenty of land, and much of it had not yet been wasted by constant tilling and erosion. When the French were driven out, the Haitian peasant re-created an economic world of his own liking. The plantation system which had poured out sugar and coffee and indigo for Europe faded away, and in its place there sprang up an agrarian system which has continued until the present day. In the early

[1] [Franklin, The Present State of Hayti, p. 362. Cf. p. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1958) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

10. The Arts—Flour, Wood, and Iron

It is the nonmaterial arts and traditions that have thrived best in Haiti through the years of slavery, political unrest, and poverty. Religious concepts, music, dancing, folk tales, proverbs, and games are found everywhere in profusion. Material arts of the past have fared less well. Today, nothing is left of the old African knowledge of wood carving, metal casting, appliqué work, and weaving. Why such major African arts have died out in Haiti is no mystery. They disappeared simply because there was no place for them under the slave system or in the new Haitian society which followed it.

Under the colonial masters, the demands made on the New World African were for coffee, cotton, and indigo. His creative talents were channeled into carpentry, masonry, and the building of facilities for production. There were no traditional artistic outlets or patrons for the wood carver, and no need for the weaver. Nor, during the years of slavery, was there much leisure for the craftsman to do his work even for the fun of it, should he be so inclined; indeed, this approach to wood carving or any other art would have been little understood or appreciated by most West Africans. A man who made an art object purely and simply to express a creative urge rather than to fill an express need would have been regarded as slightly eccentric. The old West African wood carvings with which we are now familiar were made because they were *required* for some purpose. A figure of a deity was needed in a shrine, a carved protective guard was needed for the household, a grave marker or a ceremonial mask was obligatory.

In Haiti the needs of those who ruled were different. The slave with knowledge of the forge was not put to work making spears, ceremonial axes, and the like; he was assigned the task of making grillwork for houses, hinges and bolts, iron tires for coach wheels, and metal parts for the sugar mills. The anonymous African ironworker did his job well.

2: Courlander B-8 (1937-1966) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P. 148]

13. Comments on the Mighty: Political Songs

The African-style song of social criticism has found no worthier subjects than the historic political figures of Haiti. There is no doubt that the African slaves used this art form to express their feelings toward the white masters as they had used it to comment upon the behavior of their own chiefs and fellow tribesmen. The worthy leaders were praised in song; the unworthy were castigated and their sins, failures, and social misdemeanors publicized in folk songs. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, slavery had come to an end in Haiti. The deep democratic sense of human dignity had outlasted the colonial masters and emerged tempered and sharp. The songs of criticism became not only comments upon political figures but campaign propaganda as well. They dwelt upon the accomplishments or faults of the candidates for political office. Friendly songs sought out every virtue, and invented others, in the man or woman being praised. Unfriendly songs lashed out and lacerated or poked biting fun at the subject, not even sparing his physical deformities.

Yet the political songs are more than statements of merit or fault. Cumulatively they are a kind of folk history of Haiti. No political aspirant ever went unsung by his peasant army, or unridiculed by his opponent's followers. The songs the people sang about their heroes and their enemies recall events and details that formal history has forgotten or ignored. The memory of the folk song is powerful and long. Some of the recollections go back more than a century.

History books tell us that in December, 1843, Major Charles Hérard aîné Rivière was elected to the office of the presidency, and that a new constitution was drawn up by the Constituent Assembly. The new constitution was an accomplishment of the liberal and democratic forces of the nation. It guaranteed certain civil rights to the people. It provided that judges be elected instead of appointed, abolished life terms for

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P. 349]

Notes

Chapter 1: *The Making of the Haitian* (pp. 1-7)

[1]The name Ganda survives in Haiti as the name of a deity.

[2]Herskovits, in *The Myth of the Negro Past* (p. 47), provides a tabulation of raw data found in the manifests recorded for slaves shipped to Virginia between 1710 and 1769: 20,964 slaves were reported shipped from "Africa," 3,632 from Gambia, 6,777 from "Guinea," 9,224 from Calabar, 3,800 from Angola, and 1,011 from Madagascar. Of those shipped from the island of Madagascar, 473 were listed as coming from Mozambique.

[3]Bartolomé de Las Casas.

Chapter 2: *Man and the Universe: Vodoun* (pp. 8-18)

[1]See Courlander, *Haiti Singing*, p. 7.

[2]Schweinfurth in *The Heart of Africa*, II, 31, says: "In Loango all exorcists and conjurors are called *ganga*." Leo Wiener, in *Africa and the Discovery of America* (Philadelphia: Innes and Sons, 1922), III, 32, reports: "Forms of *ganga* have in Bantu the meaning 'medicine' but also 'magic'—such as Nyika *ganga* and Kongo *nganga*."

[3]Gorer, *Africa Dances*, p. 130; Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 208 ff.

[4]From the Fon *houn-so* or *houn-su*. Among the Arada of Dahomey a *houn-su* was regarded as a spiritual wife of the deity. She was a servant of the cult temple, and in some instances a wife of the cult priest.

[5]Translated from the French of Aubin, *En Haiti*, pp. 57-59.

[6]Deren, in her *Divine Horsemen* (pp. 119 ff.), gives an excellent report of a service for Agwé in a boat at sea. Aubin (*op. cit.*, p. 108) seems to have given the first description of this service at sea for the loa Agwé.

[7]Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, p. 119.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 123. Leyburn advances the theory that Vodoun developed during this period as a result of the vacuum left by the Church. Although the Church did in effect leave the field to the African cults, one must assume that the Arada, Congo, and other cults were already organized and possessed of great vitality before the Haitian revolution. Implicit evidence points to a continuity of cult life from the earliest days of the African on Haitian soil. There are no statistics to reveal the extent of cult membership at the end of the eighteenth century, but the content and form of Vodoun today are so overwhelmingly African that it is difficult to think of Haitian cult activity as the product of a renaissance.

Chapter 3: *The Loa: Gods of the Haitian Mountains* (pp. 19-39)

[1]The term *vodoun*, used in this precise sense, conforms to the original Fon (Dahomean) usage. The term *hounsi*, also of Fon origin, signifies "spirit" and belongs to the same root

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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II

FRENCH COLONIAL ORIGINS

175 648 FRANCE'S wealthiest colony in 1791 was, and had been for decades, the small territory of Saint-Domingue, as Haiti was known at that time. It had belonged to France for less than a century. French freebooters and buccaneers of the seventeenth century actually presented the colony to their mother country, for these sea rovers, harrying the Spanish Main, used as a base for their predatory raids the small island of Tortuga (La Tortue, The Turtle) off the northern coast of Haiti. They often came over to the western part of the large Spanish island of Santo Domingo (Haiti), then almost deserted, to shoot wild cattle for food; then they would hasten back to Tortuga for safety. At first Tortuga had been shared by English, Dutch, and French buccaneers, but gradually the French came to outnumber the others, so that when the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 concluded the War of the Grand Alliance, France claimed and Spain ceded the western third of the island of Santo Domingo. The English and Dutch were meanwhile picking up other Caribbean fragments of the decaying Spanish Empire.

175 563 24 The early years of this new French colony were unimpressive, the majority of its residents being former buccaneers, who could hardly have regarded agricultural life as other than dull, and who certainly did not make successful farmers. Only when new immigrants from France in the seventeen-twenties demonstrated that steady profits could be made by raising indigo, sugar, coffee, and cocoa, all of which flourished in the region, did the era of prosperity begin. [464] [439] Plantations were soon staked out all over Saint-Domingue. The great problem was to find adequate labor for the fields. Whoever had crops to sell was sure of a ready market, but crops would not grow 175 24 567 without cultivation. Since there were no natives in Saint-Domingue for the French planters to exploit, the colonizers chose the other favorite alternative of the eighteenth century: Negro slavery. In the 1730's Saint-Domingue began to compete with England's North American colonies for the cargo of the steady stream of slave ships from Africa. There is no indication that the supply of blacks ever

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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equaled the demand for them; in 1791 the census listed half a million then living, but no writer seems to have even a vague idea of how many millions were imported during the sixty years of the colony's heyday.

Production, particularly of sugar and coffee, steadily increased until the tiny colony ranked among the wealthiest regions of the world. The Spanish Indies were declining, so that Saint-Domingue alone far outranked them all combined between 1766 and 1791. Splendid roads were built, extensive irrigation projects developed, and stately mansions erected. Life moved along with ceremony and display—for the planters; attended by their black lackeys, the white French masters entertained royally or were driven like lords in their coaches to make formal visits to neighbors. Many of these well-to-do colonials spent half their time in Paris, ostentatiously spending their riches. To be "wealthy as a Creole" came to be a common expression in France.[1] Perhaps nowhere in the Americas was existence at once so delightful and so ornamental as it was for the wealthy planters among the 36,000 whites of Saint-Domingue in 1791.

For the mother country, too, this small bit of tropical land was profitable during the latter days of Bourbon royalty. Neither Martinique nor Guadeloupe could compare with it in value. In 1789 nearly two thirds of the foreign commercial interests of France centred in Saint-Domingue; its combined exports and imports were valued at more than $140,000,000; its sugar, coffee, indigo, and cotton supplied the home market and employed in prosperous years more than 700 ocean-going vessels, with as many as 80,000 seamen.[2]

Where wealth exists, social distinctions generally develop. In Saint-Domingue the evolving class system produced such discord that sparks from the French Revolution eventually set off an explosion in the colony. Casual surveys of Haitian history generally record that in 1791 the slaves revolted, and that out of this insurrection grew the war of independence. This is true; but it was not the resentment of slaves against their masters which caused the final explosion; the slaves were tinder used by others to keep the conflagration burning. Negro slaves, of course, did not figure in the "class" system; they were below the classes of colonial society. The class system, properly

1. The word "creole" means only "colonial born"; there is no connotation of race mixture in the term.

2. Pamphile de Lacroix, *Mémoires*, II, 277.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 speaking, consisted of the three groups known as *grands blancs, petits*
565 *blancs*, and *gens de couleur*.[3] Although no precise English term will translate either of the first two categories, the former embraced the important whites—owners of large plantations, wealthy merchants, and high officials of the state; the latter designated all other whites of the colony—shopkeepers, artisans, small planters with only a few slaves, little people busily engaged in social climbing, and shiftless whites lazily slipping downhill. The 28,000 gens de couleur included all free persons who had African blood in their veins.

It is highly probable that without this third group there would have been no violent outbreak in 1791, no achievement of final independence in 1804, and no such caste system as exists in Haiti at the present time.

175 That there were free people of color in the colony was due to a
567 code of laws emanating from Louis XIV, who died in 1715, years before Saint-Domingue had shown any signs of becoming prosper-
641 ous. In 1685 the Grand Monarch had issued a Code Noir to cover all
648 colonial dealings with Negro slaves. Article 59 specified that when a slave secured his liberty, either by cash purchase or by gift of his white master or parent, he was to be regarded as a full French citizen. He might own land, dispose of his wealth as he pleased, bear testimony in legal cases (even against whites), marry as he pleased, vote, bear arms, travel where he wished, embrace any career, own slaves or free them. To Louis and his ministers such provisions probably did not seem particularly magnanimous, for race prejudice was not a characteristic of the French, and it could hardly have been supposed that enough slaves would ever be freed to create much of a problem.

175 In the course of the next hundred years, however, many persons of
563 color in the colony achieved their freedom, and with it French citi-
641 zenship. The greatest number had been granted their liberty because they were the children of white masters by Negro mothers—for race mixture is always a concomitant of white ownership of black slaves.
[595] Concubinage was so regularly practiced in Saint-Domingue that it was considered quite normal. If many of the first freedmen were
563 mulattoes (half-white, half-Negro), by 1791 their descendants might
175 be quadroons, octoroons, or near-whites, for consciousness of skin

3. The gens de couleur were also often called *affranchis*, freedmen, a term which strictly would be inaccurate as applied to a free colored person of the second or third generation.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

color predisposed a freedman to separate himself, by marriage with a person at least as light as himself, as far as possible from his slave ancestors.[4]

Aside from paternity, the chief reasons for freeing a slave were faithful or extraordinary service, and the readiness of a master to free his concubine. By the time of the Revolution many of the free colored people had not known slavery in their families for four generations, while still more had been free for two or three. During the century many had acquired wealth by inheritance from former owners. Their close association with well-to-do white planters had instilled in them the desire to improve their economic fortunes as well as their culture; friendly relationships with their benefactors afforded them the opportunity. Like the grands blancs, the prosperous gens de couleur sent their children to Paris for an education, and went there themselves for pleasure.

As the free colored people flourished, so also did the jealousy of the petits blancs against them. "Society" in Saint-Domingue was beset, as is any social system which has not yet the sanctity of long tradition, with heartburnings, intrigues, resentment, snobbery. Petit blanc aspired to become grand blanc; small planter longed to be received into the smart set of the wealthy plantation owners; creole resented the toplofty airs of the recent émigré from France. What was more irksome to the petit blanc than his own exclusion from high society was the acceptance into it of many colored people whose parents or grandparents had been African slaves. Since many of the gens de couleur were better educated and more cultured than the lower-class whites, inner consciousness of mental inferiority may have added fuel to the fires of jealousy.

The growing wealth of free colored people was notable in the latter years of the century. One fertile parish in the South (Jérémie) was almost entirely in their hands, while in every other part of the colony they had bought or inherited handsome plantations. They looked upon Saint-Domingue as their fatherland, not hoping (as did many of the whites) to retire to France to spend their fortunes, nor yearning (as did many slaves) to return to Africa. The less ambitious

4. Certain colonial writers diverted themselves by working out all the mathematical combinations of blood mixture, with names for scores of the commoner varieties. Since people with some part of white blood in their veins might mate with others of their own kind, with lighter or with darker persons, with black or with white, it can be imagined how complicated the question of race mixture might become.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 565 took their place in the business life of the towns, sending their children to parish schools. Colored youths served in the colonial constabulary and in the militia, acquiring a knowledge of arms and warfare later to be useful to them.

175 565 423 567 162 Estimates of their wealth vary. Some say that in 1791 they owned a third of all the land in the colony and a fourth of all the slaves; others more conservative put the figure at one fifth of each. Even this is impressive enough to account for much of the growing jealousy of their position. And by 1791 the whites outnumbered them only ten to seven.[5]

562 595 563 175 581 White women in general added their support to a movement instigated by the petits blancs for discrimination against all gens de couleur. Many wives felt resentment against the colored people because of the frequency with which their husbands took colored mistresses.[6] Moreover, the wealth of the colony attracted an immigration of Frenchwomen with marriageable but undowered daughters—in the candid French phrase, "*de filles à marier et sans dot*"—who seem to have assumed that young planters would want white French wives, even though impecunious ones. It was a shock to quite a number of them to discover that a colonial youth might prefer a colored girl who brought a dowry with her.[7]

175 565 829 Indiscreet affranchis often gave additional grounds for resentment against their group. Wishing to dissociate themselves altogether from their Negro ancestry and to be assured of social eminence, some accounted for their dark complexions by reference to obscure Indian progenitors. On this ground many secured letters patent from local government officials, of course on payment of a fee, legally estab-

162 5. The census listed 40,000 whites to 28,000 colored. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description . . . de la partie française . . . de Saint-Domingue* (Philadelphia, 1797), I, 285, gave the following figures for 1790:

	Square Leagues	*Population*	*Whites*	*Affranchis*	*Slaves*
North	480	195,000	16,000	9,000	170,000
West	820	194,000	14,000	12,500	168,000
South	186	130,000	10,000	6,500	114,000
Totals	1,486	519,000	40,000	28,000	452,000

6. One governor reported to Paris that he considered sexual jealousy the greatest cause of unrest in the colony.

7. See Sir Harry H. Johnston, *The Negro in the New World* (New York, 1910), p. 141.

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At Paris the following May, therefore, the thirty-seven delegates presented themselves. Only six were admitted as deputies. And the colonial skeptics proved correct in their apprehensions: revolutionary France soon became very much interested in the state of affairs in Saint-Domingue.

There had recently been formed in Paris a humanitarian group, considered at the time to be ultra-radical, whose announced purpose was the complete abolition of Negro slavery in all French possessions. Following the principle of demanding much in order to gain something, these *Amis des Noirs* concentrated their most serious efforts on regaining for colored colonial freedmen their former political rights. The recently promulgated "Rights of Man" made it very difficult for the French National Assembly[11] to deny the proposal of the Amis;[12] moreover, at this juncture the colored landlords of Saint-Domingue sent to Paris an offer to make the new French Republic a free gift of one fifth of their wealth on condition of being no longer subject to the creole tyranny of caste.

The strategical blunder of the self-assertive white planters having now become entirely apparent to their deputies in Paris, these left no stone unturned to thwart the objective of the Amis des Noirs. By indefatigable manoeuvring they at least partially succeeded, for the National Assembly passed an ambiguous resolution which, while apparently granting political rights to colored people, nevertheless left the interpretation of the grant to already existing colonial authorities.

In the colony complete confusion reigned when news of the resolution was received. Colored people everywhere joyfully demanded their rights, only to be indignantly refused. The whites, with no intention of yielding an inch, were nevertheless undecided as to a proper course of action to pursue: one group wished to announce the colony's immediate independence from France, offering the familiar argument that only white planters knew how to manage the colony's peculiar affairs; the other group still cautiously counseled inaction and waiting for the storm to blow over. A young mulatto, Ogé, educated in France and encouraged by the Amis des

11. The National Assembly had succeeded the States-General.

12. The Assembly was finding "liberté, égalité, fraternité" as uncomfortable a motto to live up to as Americans were finding their own declaration, in 1776, of belief in the "self-evident" proposition that *all* men are created free and equal.

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Noirs, having returned to Saint-Domingue to campaign for the political rights of his group, led with his friend Chavanne a demonstration at Cap Français. The white authorities seized and executed them with notable brutality.

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This occurred in March, 1791. In May came the news that the National Assembly in France had finally yielded to pressure, and had decreed that men of mixed blood born of free parents should be admitted to representation in colonial assemblies. The chagrin and anger of the whites at this decree was so violent that the governor-general of Saint-Domingue immediately suspended its operation.

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The issue was now clearly drawn: free colored men knew that they would never secure their rights except by force. But before they could bring to maturity their plan of action, suddenly the calculations of both parties were completely upset. The Negro slaves revolted.

If ever slaves had reason to rebel, the Negroes of Saint-Domingue did. The same harshness which the whites showed to free colored people marked the treatment of black slaves; and as racial antagonism deepened, white masters seemed to become utterly heartless in their treatment of the inarticulate blacks. Allowing for the exceptions which accompany most generalizations, it is clear from the record that the planters were, in the main, callous, ruthless, some of them even fiendish, in their treatment of slaves. Flogging a man to death was not uncommon; certain slaves were buried alive; pregnant women were forced to work so hard that miscarriage resulted. Some of the punishments meted out were merely brutal; others were torture; and some were sadistic, the masters relishing the pain they were causing. A certain slave in the North was nailed by his hands to a wall, and then, after standing all day in the burning sun, was made to eat his own amputated ears. A woman planter had the tongues of all her slaves cut out; another woman caused the starvation of her maid by having a gag fixed around the child's head.[13] Visitors to the colony in the 1780's often commented on the general want of self-control on the part of the planters—their violent gusts of anger and passionate outbreaks over trifles; and the victims of these outbursts

13. An officer of the court of the Negro king Christophe later wrote in two volumes a gruesome account of the treatment of slaves by French masters in the latter days of the colony. Although certainly exaggerated, it probably contains a measure of truth. See Baron de Vastey, *Réflexions politiques sur les noirs et les blancs* (Sans Souci, 1817); and *Essai sur les causes de la révolution et des guerres civiles d'Hayti* (Sans Souci, 1819).

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were the slaves. Most of the blacks accordingly needed only leadership to arouse them and direct their vengeance.

Very little of the background of the insurrection is known. The certain facts are these: on the night of August 14, 1791, at a pretended Vodun ceremony in the woods of the Turpin plantation, during a violent storm, several wily and powerful slaves laid plans for a general uprising. Their intentions were communicated, apparently by drum signals, to neighboring plantations. Six days later the attack began, the blacks in that section of the North indiscriminately slaughtering every white man, woman, and child on whom they could lay their hands. From this centre the massacre spread, accompanied by general arson, until practically every plantation in the fertile northern plain was a shambles. The whites who had escaped destruction cowered in the capital city.

The insurrection of 1791 returned measure for measure to the planters for their previous cruelties. Whether one reads accounts written by Haitian patriots or by white apologists, the story is the same: the ferocities on both sides were almost incredible. Blacks gutted children and raped women, whites broke captured Negroes on the wheel, poured boiling oil in their ears, and flayed them alive. The Reign of Terror in France was decorous by comparison. The pent-up hatred of decades was working itself out.

Against half a million riotous blacks the handful of whites had no chance. All who could leave the country fled precipitately. The gens de couleur, on the contrary, although at first alarmed, soon discovered that the revolting slaves were inclined to be friendly to them. They accordingly tried to turn the insurrection to their own purpose, to seize the rule of the colony now being depopulated of whites. France, herself in turmoil, sent over various commissioners whose thankless duty it was to try to restore order; but they were incompetent, often worked at odds with each other, and sometimes engaged in actual treachery. Matters were, if anything, complicated by their ministrations.

In addition, Spain and England, always ready to harass the French, sent troops into Saint-Domingue on the pretext of trying to put down the slave insurrection lest it spread to their neighboring colonies of Santo Domingo and Jamaica. The French general in the colony, Laveaux, would shortly have been defeated if help had not come from two natives, one a well-to-do mulatto, the other a black

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For three months Toussaint's vigorous fighting broke the force of the French attack; one white army was swept away. But Toussaint made two fatal errors of judgment: he relied upon his trained army with its Negro generals, instead of arming his half-million Negroes for guerrilla warfare; and he trusted the pledged word of honor of Leclerc. His army fought bravely enough against the French legions, but the consensus of military experts is that Toussaint's officers, jealous of his domination and feeling that eventually France must win, treacherously gave over their posts and forces to Leclerc. Christophe surrendered on April 26, and Toussaint had no alternative but to put himself in Leclerc's hands.

Napoleon's private orders to Leclerc were positive and precise: "Follow your instructions exactly, and the moment you have rid yourself of Toussaint, Christophe, Dessalines, and the principal brigands, and the masses of the blacks have been disarmed, send over to the continent all the blacks and mulattoes who have played a rôle in the civil troubles. . . . Rid us of these gilded Africans, and we shall have nothing more to wish." Leclerc set himself methodically to carry out these instructions; by April, 1802, he had disarmed the blacks and received Christophe's surrender; the next task was to rid himself of Toussaint. By an apparently innocent invitation to dine and discuss the affairs of the colony, he lured Toussaint into his headquarters on June 10.[20] In the course of the meal Toussaint was seized, bound, and hurried on board a waiting ship. Haiti never saw him again; within a year he died of cold and starvation in a dungeon high in the Jura Mountains of southeastern France.

With Toussaint out of the way, it was now in order to proceed to the second part of Napoleon's plan—the reëstablishment of slavery. Leclerc was to use his own discretion as to the precise moment and manner of announcing this. His instructions from the Minister of Marine, Decrès (June 14, 1802), read in part:

> As regards the return of the blacks to the old régime, the bloody struggle out of which you have just come victorious with glory commands us to use the utmost caution. Perhaps we should only entangle ourselves in it anew if we wished precipitately to break that idol of liberty in whose name so much blood has already flowed. For some time yet vigilance, order, a discipline at once rural and military, must take the place of the positive and pronounced slavery of the colored people of your colony. Especially the

20. There is evidence to show that Christophe suggested this stratagem to Leclerc.

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175 master's good usage must re-attach them to his rule. When they shall have
648 felt by comparison the difference between a usurping and tyrannical yoke
727 [apparently he means such a yoke as Toussaint's] and that of the legitimate
567 proprietor interested in their preservation, then the moment will have arrived for making them return to their original condition, from which it was so disastrous to draw them.

175 The plan to reëstablish slavery, however, was never carried out,
648 nor was its scheduled sequel, the occupation of Louisiana. The French
727 soldiers in Saint-Domingue began to succumb to an invisible assailant —yellow fever. The first French army of 17,000 men had been largely consumed in the task of conquering Toussaint's armies; the second was now being swept away by disease. Leclerc's letters to Napoleon pleading for reinforcements soon became frantic in their despair. Fever was weakening the army at the very moment when rumors of impending reënslavement were strengthening the number of active antagonists to the French. The black generals who had deserted Toussaint for Leclerc now swung back again to the opposition. Then Leclerc himself fell ill of the fever. Apparently all-conquering in June, 1802, by November he was dead.

175 This was the turning point in Napoleon's whole American policy.
727 The war had ruined Saint-Domingue economically; it had destroyed
721 plantations, paralyzed labor, and reduced the population to bar-
648 barism. To resume the conquest would have cost France heavily; the army dreaded service in a region where death was almost certain; the financial expense had been frightful: one year of war had consumed 50,000 men and several million dollars, yet at least as many men and as much money would still be needed before any return could be expected. Consequently, Napoleon decided to withdraw from his whole American experiment, saving face as far as possible. He appointed the brave but incompetent Rochambeau to succeed Leclerc, promised him reinforcements—and then broke the Peace of Amiens, so that France became embroiled in a European war. Affairs in Saint-Domingue (including the troops promised to Rochambeau) were conveniently forgotten after March, 1803; and the whole Louisiana territory was sold to the United States.

175 The end of French control in Saint-Domingue came shortly.
648 Rochambeau, as well as he could, waged desultory warfare, hanging, shooting, drowning, burning all the Negroes he could catch; hunting them with fifteen hundred bloodhounds bought in Jamaica for more

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175 material—Frenchmen who lived "in a deplorable state of morals,
111 too often recalling those of the freebooters and buccaneers" who were their ancestors and predecessors. Even when the calibre of the colonists improved, religion was a minor concern, business and pleasure pushing it well into the background.

There was no great antagonism toward the fathers; indeed, not enough attention was paid to the priests and their work to warrant any very strong feeling. It was indifference and insolence the fathers had to face, or, if they showed too great an interest in the welfare of slaves upon a plantation, suspicion and peremptory curbs. By the old [670] Code Noir under which the colony theoretically operated, masters were obligated to send their slaves to Mass on Sundays and feast days under penalty of heavy fines; the Code likewise prescribed the baptism of all blacks and their instruction in the Catholic faith. But just as the colonists ignored all parts of the Code antagonistic to their own economic interests, so specifically did they disregard the sections dealing with their religious obligations.

175 Some priests were in any case not too zealous. It was much more
193 agreeable to attend only to external forms, and so participate in the
662 charming life of high society, than to stand firm against laxity. If a
• 567 priest showed enthusiasm for his duties to his African charges he was
[792] almost certain to be accused by the planters of stirring up the slaves and undermining the foundations of colonial society. This was, in fact, the very accusation leveled at the Jesuits to bring about their expulsion from the colony in 1764. The example was not lost upon other priests.

175 "The safety of the whites demands that the Negroes be kept in
771 profound ignorance," said one of the later governors in a message to
563 France. This sentiment, perfectly expressing the conviction of the majority of planters, not only prevented any secular education of the blacks, but actually kept many of them from instruction in catechism, creed, or any part of the Catholic faith. If instruction is forbidden, few of the sacraments can be administered, for how can a person be confirmed, confess, do penance, if he know not even the first principles of the faith? Few masters objected to the baptism of slave children; on the other hand, they roundly disapproved of the sacrament of marriage for their blacks, since this might place an obstacle in the way of slave sales, and even open the way for assimilation of blacks and whites in the colony.

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Vodun, therefore, show the Catholic influence, exerted in the main unconsciously.

Unlike the great religions, Vodun lacks a formal theology. As has been said, no seminary exists for the training of priests and priestesses, no congress or college of fathers states or amends the creed; there is no church court to discipline the individual enthusiast, or catechism for the young; no scriptures or sermons are printed or read to strengthen the faith. Vodun is an informal religion of action, not a formal one of reason. It flourishes because it is malleable, adaptive, suited to the needs of a people living close to nature and without education. To give a single lucid description of this Haitian folk religion, created as it is by everybody and by nobody, is about as possible as to give one description of home life, which varies according to the couple. We may, however, outline the common elements of creed and practice.

2. *Formative Days*

To say casually that Vodun is African in origin is to say little more than that it does not stem from the great world religions. There is no unity in Africa today; there was still less in the eighteenth century when slaves were being imported into Haiti. At that period it was possible to find a new dialect and a different set of folkways every few miles along the western seacoast. Two slaves from one geographical region (the Gold Coast, for example) might not understand each other or have the slightest predisposition to sympathize with each other's customs.

Colonial planters experimented with slaves from various regions in Africa, just as they might compare breeds of horses; setting tractability off against originality, brute strength against skill, intelligence against health. In this quest for a perfect slave, Negroes were imported from all parts of the Dark Continent, from Senegal in the northwest around the five thousand miles of seacoast to Mozambique and Madagascar in the east. Partly because trading conditions were more favorable in the Dahomey and Congo regions, and partly because the qualities of Dahomean and Congolese were preferred, Negroes from these two sections soon came to predominate over others in the colony. Whereas "Congo" was merely a geographical term, implying no community of feeling among the natives living

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175 567 along that river, Dahomey was the name of a powerful kingdom under a political administration which embraced a fair amount of interchange of ideas and similarity of social institutions, including religion.

175 567 178 Discretion made the planters separate slaves who knew each other, in order to minimize opportunities for revolt among them. This policy, although it prevented the rapid growth of "slave" customs, at the same time dispersed Dahomeans all over the colony; beliefs and practices held in common among the slaves were likely to take on a Dahomean cast. Since their work was directed, their freedom of movement limited, and their family life broken up, there was practically no opportunity for the outcropping of *any* African ideas relating to economic life, government, property, education, or marriage. The one sphere in which it was possible for Old World beliefs to continue was the religious. No slave dealer could penetrate the minds of his workers or silence their folk tales and folk songs in the evening when work was done; even the strictest plantation owners allowed dances in the slave quarters on Saturday nights and Sunday. It is the dance, a vital part of Dahomean religion, which seems to have formed the nucleus around which the diverse beliefs of African tribesmen grouped themselves, for it was a form of action which need not involve anything more than amusement or emotional release, if the participant were not religiously inclined. In the beginning, as Goethe observes, was the Act. To this simple Act of dancing, the Word, with thought behind it, could easily be added later. Practically all African tribesmen danced; and the numerous Dahomeans had a dance which was ostensibly for diversion but could be turned to a religious purpose as well.

175 178 796 771 535

771 171 174 Here, then, was the skeleton of a slave religion. Although every single African tribe had its own beliefs and ritual, each (so far as we know) had common elements with every other one. For example, all slaves, whether Senegalese or Angolese, believed in a multiplicity of spiritual beings, some of whom controlled the aspects of nature—lightning and storms, the sea, the sky. They thought that disease and other ill fortune came from spirits who must be placated in order to win back health and well-being. All felt that the normal course of events could be altered by magical spells, formulae, or charms; that one could bring misfortune to an enemy, luck to oneself, or ward off otherwise inevitable fate. Most of them had been accustomed to

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learn the properties of plants, both for healing and for poison. Except for the belief in spiritual beings, this folk knowledge would hardly have been classed as religious, for it was useful in every phase of daily life; the classification is that of the anthropologist, not of the simple black.

If Dahomean beliefs prevailed over others of African origin, it was chiefly because of the numerical preponderance of Dahomeans in the colony, together with the popularity of their religious dances. The Dahomean spirits or gods were Vodun; the dance in which the worshiper sought the inspiration of the spirits was a Vodun dance. Like all but the highly organized religions, this one recognized the validity of other beliefs. Its practitioners were not bigots. No hierarchy existed to keep out new accretions. Imperceptibly these were added to the original basic form: here an Arada spirit, there a Congolese prayer, and in many instances a Catholic saint, until the composite Vodun religion began to take shape.

There is no evidence that during colonial times Vodun was ever considered important by the white ruling class—certainly not as a faith. To most planters the word was the name for a vigorous dance. Judging from Moreau de Saint-Méry's description it was held openly enough, at times being witnessed by the whites as a sort of nocturnal diversion. Moreau knew, as did other whites, that there were "superstitious beliefs" connected with it, yet the offhand use of the word "superstition" was indication enough that the beliefs were not regarded as important. We have seen, however, what profitable use the slaves were able to make of the apparent innocence of their dances. When the idea of revolt began to germinate among them, gathering on each plantation at least once a week they had ample opportunity to hatch their plans. It is known that the campaign for revolt was developed partly under the stimulus of the Negro Boukman, a *houngan* or priest of Vodun. By means of drumbeats, which to the whites merely pounded out the rhythm for dancing but had for centuries been a means of communication at long distance in parts of West Africa, that ripening plot was telegraphed from one plantation to another. Even more important, perhaps, was the unity of feeling made possible, despite all incoherence of tradition and language, by the Vodun background.

The revolt of half a million slaves was a success. This fact has been rather too calmly accepted by historians of Saint-Domingue, who

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IX

HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

TOLERANT understanding of the ways of alien people is rare in matters relating to sex. Occasionally we may regard marital and sexual practices which differ from our own as amusing or ridiculous; more frequently we find them distasteful and disgusting. A long religious heritage has implanted in us a definite personal morality, familiar in Puritanism and in the codes of the great majority of early American pioneers. Accompanying and dominated by this religious aspect has been the legal idea of sexual morality. A middle-class tradition of private property, hence of orderly marriages legally recognized, has schooled us for centuries to approve certain moral and sexual rules: monogamic marriage, children born in wedlock, a public wedding ceremony by approved authorities, censure of sexual relations which might confuse the passage of property. Although sympathetic tolerance for foreign ways has never been an outstanding American characteristic, it is least evident in connection with divergent sexual practices. We do not remind ourselves of the utilitarian basis of a part of our own sexual codes.

Where people have economic and social backgrounds different from those of Western Europe and the United States, other codes will prevail. Elements which have made American moral standards what they are were lacking or appeared in different form in Haiti. Instead of middle-class European tradition there was African tribal practice; instead of diffused small private properties there was slavery; instead of the Puritan notion that sex relations were in general sinful was the less rigorous view that sexual intercourse was entirely normal; instead of the example of monogamous family life constantly before the minds of children growing up, there was the example of libertinage among lofty whites and laxness among the blacks.

Nothing in the experience of the slave régime could have predisposed toward orderly marriage these people, soon to become Haitians. Certain masters actually prohibited weddings among their slaves, while most others discouraged it, since the development of family ties among the blacks would only have made for complication

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175 when slaves were to be sold. Even when whole families were brought
567 over together from Africa, it was considered discreet in Saint-
581 Domingue to separate the various members at the slave market, so
[794] that there would be little chance of combinations and intrigues. Theoretically the Church was in favor of regular marriages between slave men and women, but even if the Africans had understood or desired the "sacrament," the opposition of the white planters would have been enough to curb missionary insistence on this point; the Jesuits had already been expelled from the colony for their too great zeal in plantation reforms.

175 As a usual thing, then, slaves simply cohabited. It was not against
567 the rules of a plantation for a slave and the woman with whom he
588 consorted to live together in a slave hut with the children born to
[843] them; but neither was it against the rules for the overseer to put other slaves into the same hut, or to sell promising slave children as if they were cattle.[1] Little was done to prevent sex relations between slaves, although masters had varying attitudes toward the results of these relations: some planters welcomed births as a stockbreeder welcomes additions to his herd; others resented the pregnancy of slave women as an obstacle to necessary field work. In the former case, a planter's capital was increased; in the latter, abortions resulted when the overseer drove pregnant women too hard work under the tropical sun.

175 The freedom of the planters with the persons of their attractive
567 female slaves likewise weakened any tendency toward monogamous
588 family life as conceived by bourgeois European society. The relationship between master and slave woman was momentary. Not often was a woman so beguiling that she could be called a concubine; still less often was she a mistress. The latter estate was the height of any female slave's worldly ambition, for not only might she then be freed, but she could live a life of leisure. In rare cases she might hope to persuade her white paramour into marriage. Almost certainly her mulatto children would be free.

175 In so far as there was any predisposition toward strict observance of
565 European marriage practices, it was most clearly exhibited by the
591 group of affranchis. As freedmen they were intent upon establishing

[567] [588] 1. Under exceptional circumstances slaves found themselves under a benevolent, religious master who allowed them to be married by a priest and thereafter to live together as a family.

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the men as well as the women work arduously. It seems justifiable to conclude that industry has not always been a characteristic of the Haitian male; and to ask why.

One valid reason is, of course, political. As we have seen, until the American Occupation Haiti was greatly overmilitarized. Almost every able-bodied male was at one time or another during his prime a soldier in the army. Since the bane of the country from 1804 to 1915 was its revolutions, there was room for a man to serve either in the regular army or, lured by future promises, in the guerrilla forces of a scheming general. To be drawn away from the land at the very moment of physical maturity was to predispose a youth against humdrum field work. As a soldier he traveled, knew excitement, was fed and clothed, and could loaf, except during battle. So schooled, upon retirement from the army a man was hardly disposed to settle down to steady labor. Even if as a young man he remained upon his farm, he might at any moment be called away to service, just when he was most needed for the crop. If Haiti was to be fed, the women, who alone were exempt from army service, provided the only available regular workers.

Tradition offers another explanation for masculine independence of hard work. The African background of female agricultural labor has been cited. In slavery the men had been degraded by being forced to do work of this sort, while the lot of women hardly differed from what it had been in the old country. Under Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe, with their large armies, women, already numerically preponderant, formed the vast majority of field workers. Independent small farming hardly changed the picture. African tradition, moreover, made the man master of his property and wives, the rôle of woman being that of man's inferior and useful servant.

Disease is another partial explanation. Until recently no one seems to have been aware of the prevalence in Haiti of such diseases as hookworm, malaria, and tuberculosis which, without necessarily affecting a person outwardly, may nevertheless sap his vitality, leaving him listless and worn out by even slight exertion. Obviously much of what was called laziness was due to disease. But the flaw in this reasoning is that illness makes no discrimination between the sexes. If men were disease-ridden, so were women: yet the latter were steadily industrious.

Any foray into possible psychological reasons is guesswork. It

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Norman ones were less complicated; English, simpler still, reinforced the Norman tendency.

From the Spaniards of the Caribbean region Créole borrowed not only nouns (generally the most assimilable of words), but a large number of adjectives, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and certain subtler characteristics of speech.

This amalgam, then, three quarters Norman French, was the Créole language as of 1697 when France acquired Saint-Domingue, when buccaneering became unprofitable, and many of the filibusters settled down to begin a respectable life as plantation owners in the new colony. African slaves were soon imported to satisfy the demand for labor. First a few, then thousands a year and increasing thousands, were brought to Saint-Domingue. In all externalities, of which language is one, slaves must yield up their old ways and take on new. The question of interest here is to what extent the Negroes influenced Créole, giving it an "African" character.

The answer, surprising at first, is that the Negro influence was almost negligible.

In the first place, Créole was now already a language with a rich vocabulary, all the grammatical equipment, and the necessary regularities. The slaves came to the colony from all parts of Africa, and so with widely differing languages. Linguistic maps of Africa indicate the presence of hundreds of dialects up and down the west coast; tribes living fifteen miles apart spoke languages which, although belonging to the same stock, were as different as Spanish and Italian from each other. Owing to the habit of dispersing the slaves, the average Negro had no common basis of understanding with his fellow slaves on the same plantation. Practically all white freemen and overseers gave orders in Créole; this within one generation became the *lingua franca* of the plantations, an economic necessity, and socially indispensable.

In the second place, there was in Saint-Domingue no equivalent to the familiar objects of life in Africa. Trees, houses, earth there were, of course, but different kinds of trees, houses, and soil. Economic tasks were performed in a different manner with new techniques and organization. Every outward form of life was foreign to the African background. Even assuming that there had been a common Negro speech, it would have found little to attach itself to in the New World. It should be noted that Negroes likewise made few contribu-

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tions to the English language in the southern United States, where they were slaves for seventy years longer than in Haiti.

Common African economic ways yielded to the plantation system and slavery; the Negroes had no opportunity to govern themselves or settle their own disputes; they mated rather than married; their families might be broken up if the master wished to sell a slave. The one part of life in which they were permitted to follow unhindered their African ways was the intimate one of religion which, since it needed no buildings or organization, did not interfere with work, and could be entirely personal and private, was not suppressed. As has been pointed out, the Dahomean form of religion prevailed over all others and, modified, gained wide adherence among the slaves. It is precisely in Vodun that Créole has taken over its only important African words, such as Vodun, zombi, houngan, maraca, loa, houmfort, bocor, ouanga.

It would be erroneous to imply that the Negroes had no effect upon the language of which they soon became the predominant users.[6] Their operations were of a subtle sort, however. As with the Negroes of the United States, the letter "r" proved difficult, and often disappeared altogether, leaving many words softly slurred. "Marcher," for example, generally sounds as if it were *ma ché*. Likewise in the course of years they gave the language their own accent, their own modulation and tone, which make Créole sound different on their lips from a white man's way of speaking it. Some scholars attribute this to a *racial* influence—that is, to the morphology of the Negro throat and tongue. It might be pointed out to the contrary that Americans, white like the English, have given the mother tongue *their* own accent, modulation, and tone. It has certainly not yet been proved that race has anything to do with speech.

Words in imitation of a sound grow up in every language. Several western African dialects, especially Mandingue, seemed fond of onomatopoeia; in Haiti, consequently, one hears many an expressive additional word. Moreau de Saint-Méry[7] noticed this in colonial Saint-Domingue, citing such cases as the addition of "bap" to the verb "tomber," if one had fallen down lightly, or "boum" if heavily;

6. Suzanne Sylvain, *Le Créole haïtien* (Wetteren, Belgium, 1936), p. 10, says that although the African contribution to Haitian Créole is generally considered to be slight, she has personally found 150 words of undeniable African origin, and feels sure that there are many more.

7. *Description . . . de . . . Saint-Domingue*, II, 36–37.

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177 been murdered, as in 1937); and the Dominican influence can be seen in northeastern Haiti. The country as a whole, however, remains largely free from non-Haitian influence. This isolation may not continue for many more years, for successive administrations expand their health activities, try to improve economic methods, extend transportation facilities, and pursue policies of "enlightenment." Under such a regimen there will be an inevitable contact either with the experts from foreign countries or with the products of the civilization of those countries. And if Haiti should acquire foreign machines in large numbers, she would inevitably open herself to the dynamic influences which accompany a changing economy.

177 Such a possibility is in the near future, so that social scientists will 105 shortly have the chance to observe cultural contact and diffusion at work. What is more immediately to the point is the query as to how much diffusion of cultural traits occurred at the beginning of Haitian national life. How much of the African tribal culture persisted through slavery and the period of forced labor into the Haiti of small properties and peasantry? How much, on the other hand, is a borrowing from the French ways of colonial times? These questions have been treated in earlier chapters, but may be here summarized. The external structure of social institutions, particularly those which characterize the life of the élite, is clearly French. Haitian government and law, upper-class marriage, the Catholic religion—all these have a French provenance. Conversely, among the masses, the Vodun religion and possibly certain economic devices (such as the coumbite) stem from Africa. Yet the round of daily life among the people is quite obviously unlike that of any single African group from which slaves were drawn, nor is it a composite of African folkways.[7] Similarly, although the bulk of the population is peasantry, the Haitian peasant is not at all a transplanted French peasant. The folkways and mores of rural Haiti are, to a degree unusual in most countries, products of local experience, uncolored by outside influence.[8]

167 Students of race find in writings about Haiti the usual sum of generalizations about the temperament and mental characteristics of

[567] 7. It must be emphasized that the Haitian slaves were drawn from at least thirty-eight African groups. See J. G. Leyburn, "The Making of a Black Nation," in G. P. Murdock, ed., *Essays in the Science of Society* (New Haven, 1937), pp. 277–294.

8. Herskovits' theory of the African origin of certain Haitian traits has been discussed above, pp. 129–131.